

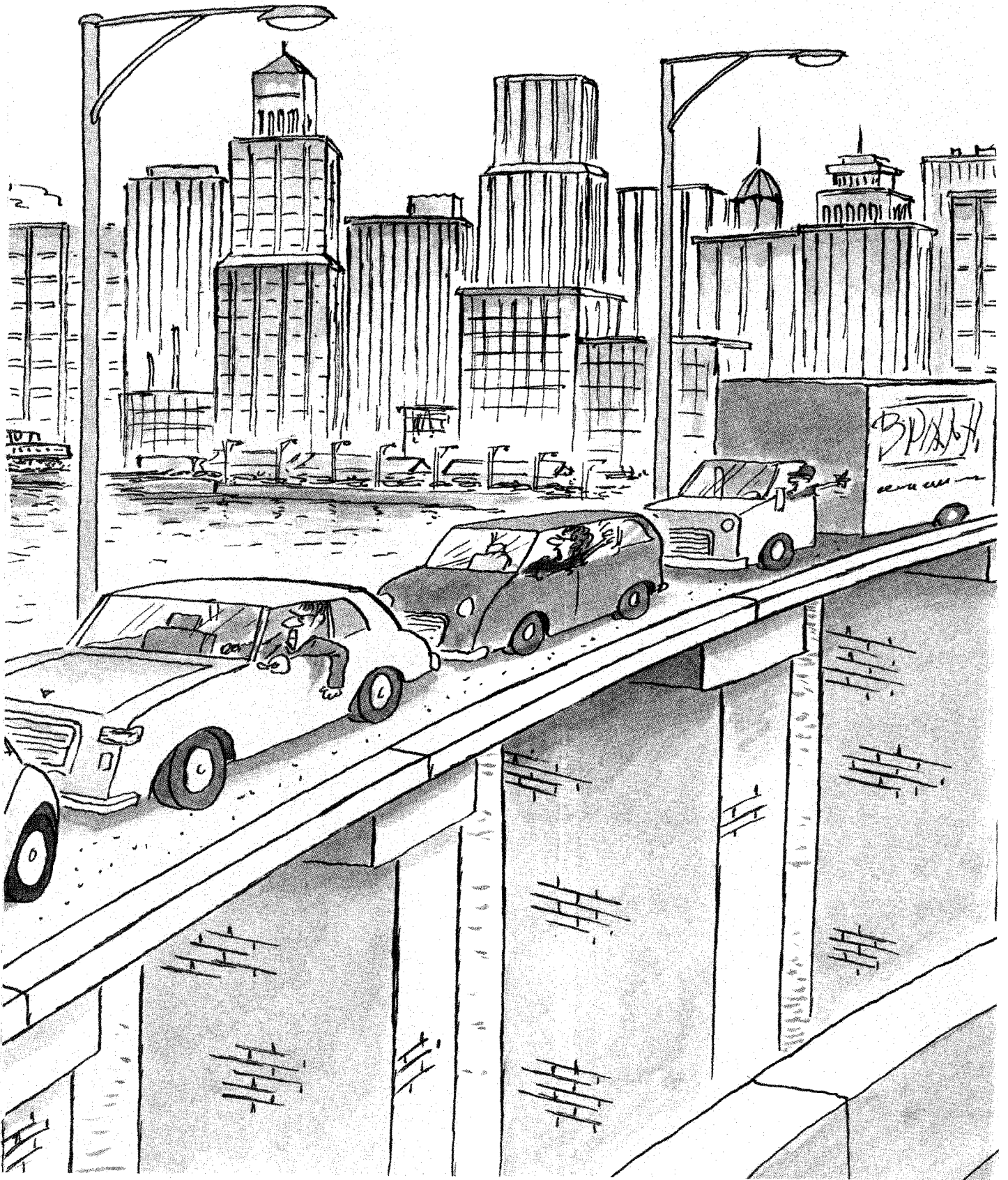
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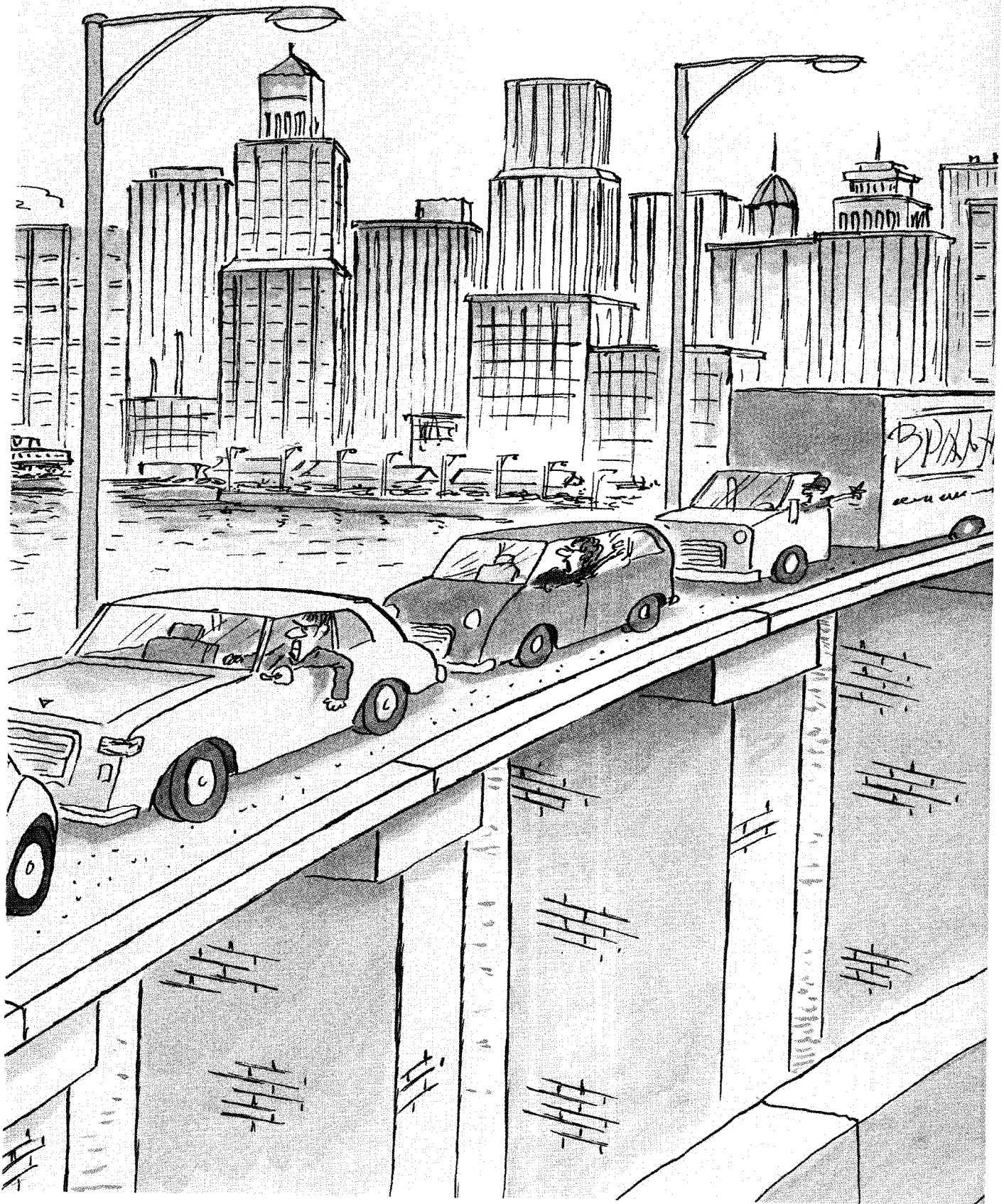


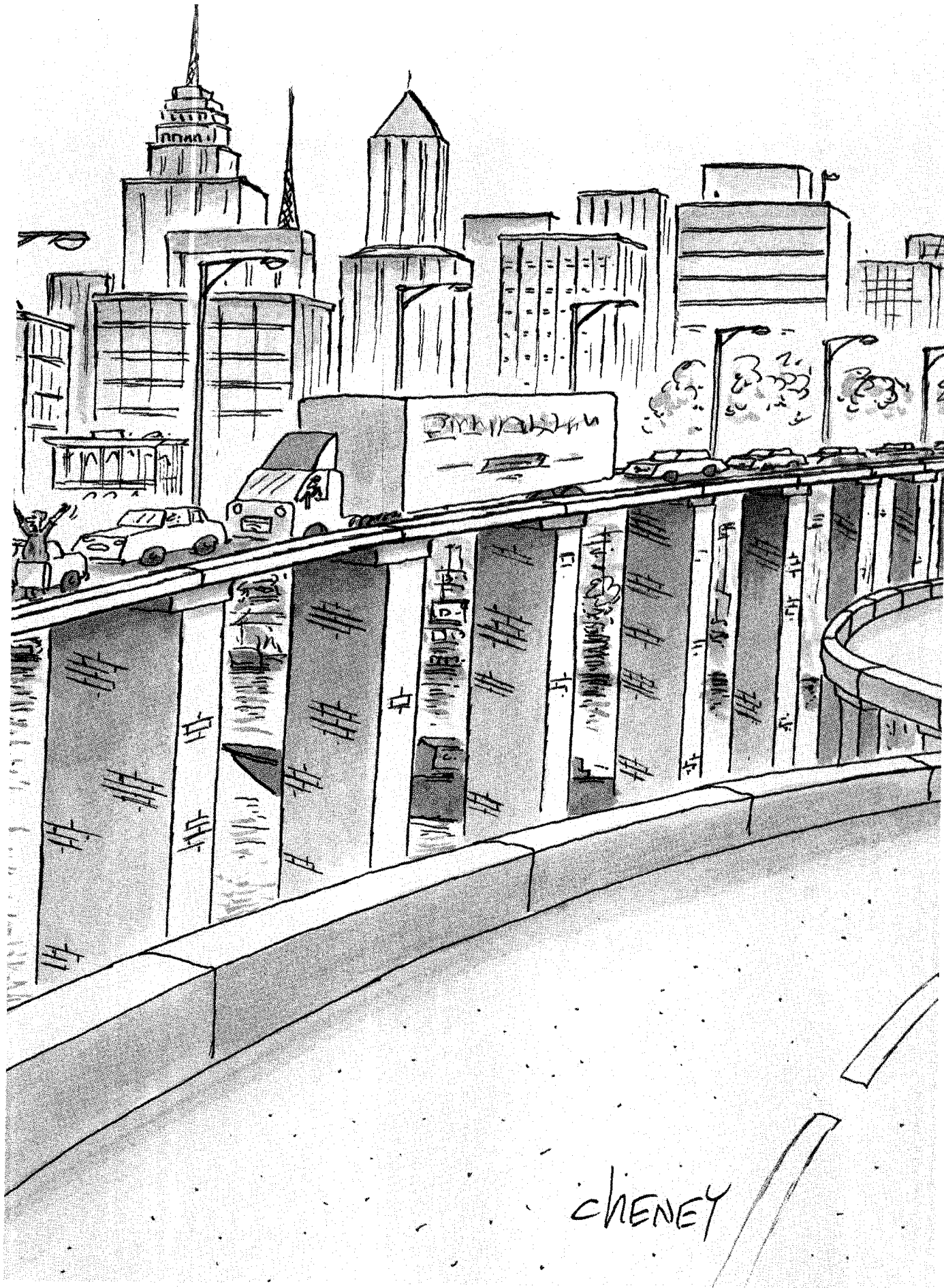
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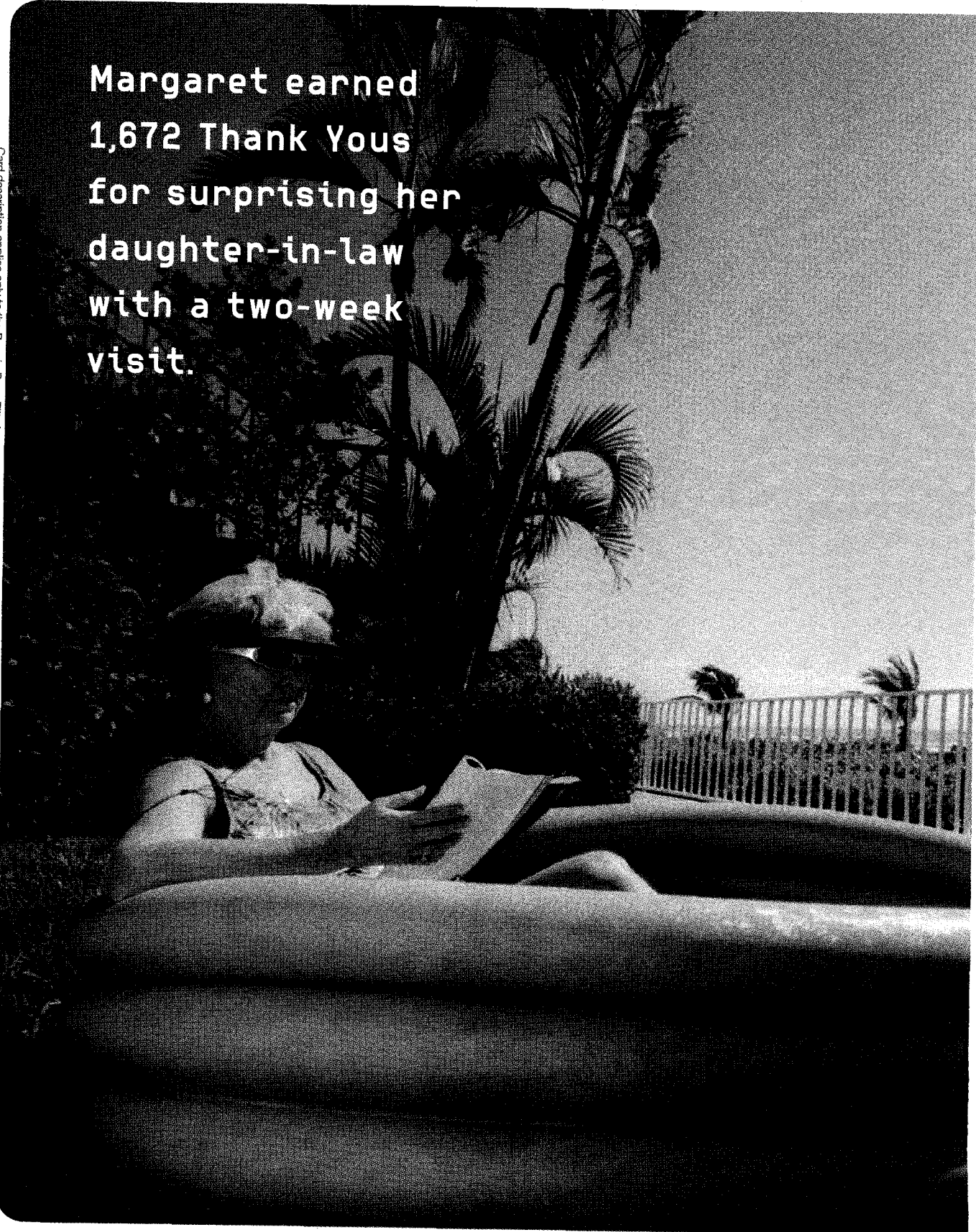




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THE NEW YORKER THE CARTOON ISSUE

NOVEMBER 29, 2004

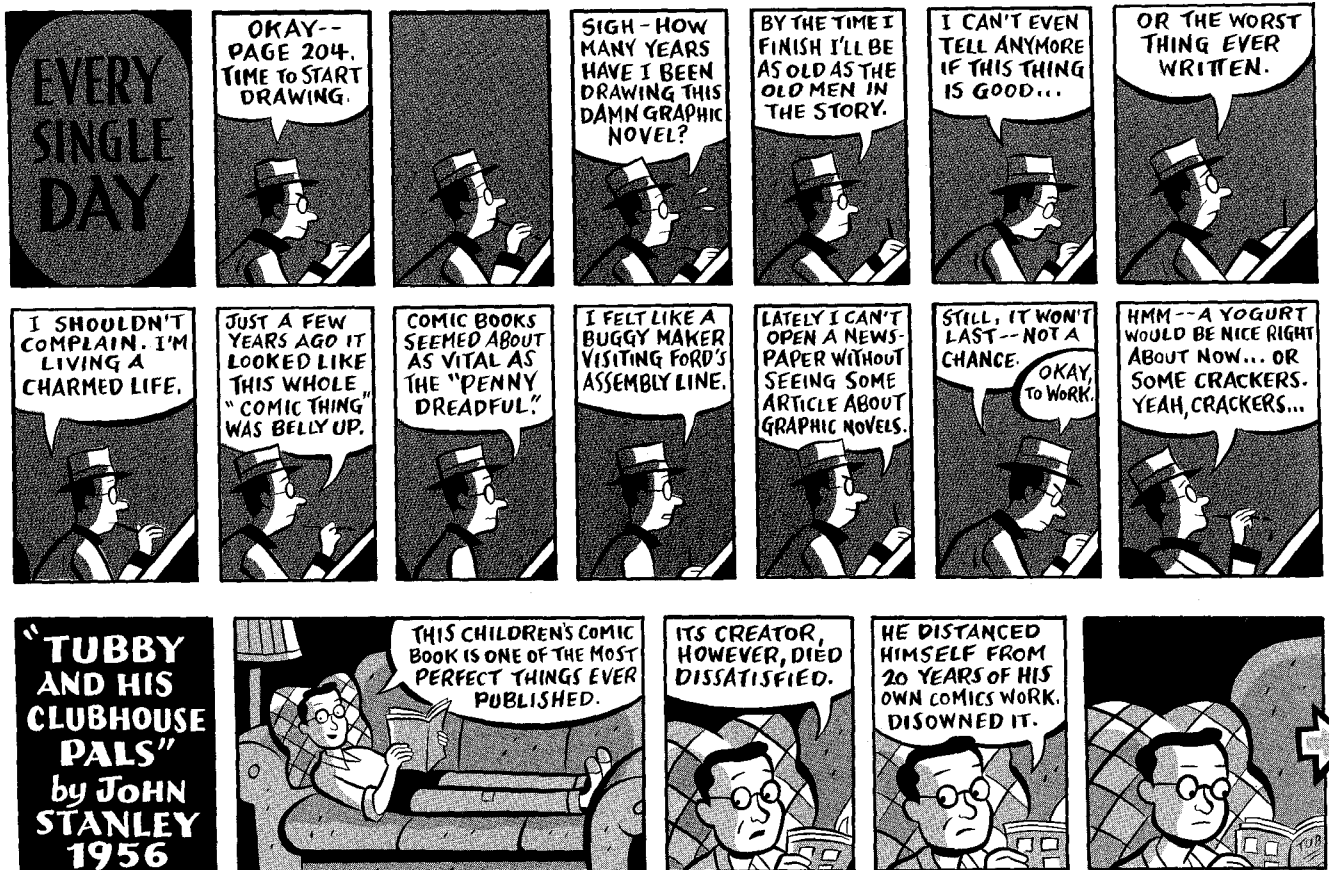
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SETH - IN ADDITION TO PENNING THE WORK FOR THIS PIECE, SETH IS ALSO THE GRAPHIC NOVELIST BEHIND "CLYDE FANS", "PALOOKAVILLE", AND "BANNOCK, BEANS, AND BLACK TEA" - A COLLABORATIVE BOOK BETWEEN SETH AND HIS FATHER. HE LIVES WITH HIS WIFE IN GUELPH, ONTARIO AND IS SLOWLY BUILDING A MODEL CITY IN HIS BASEMENT.



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SEVERAL YEARS AGO I HAD A FEVER

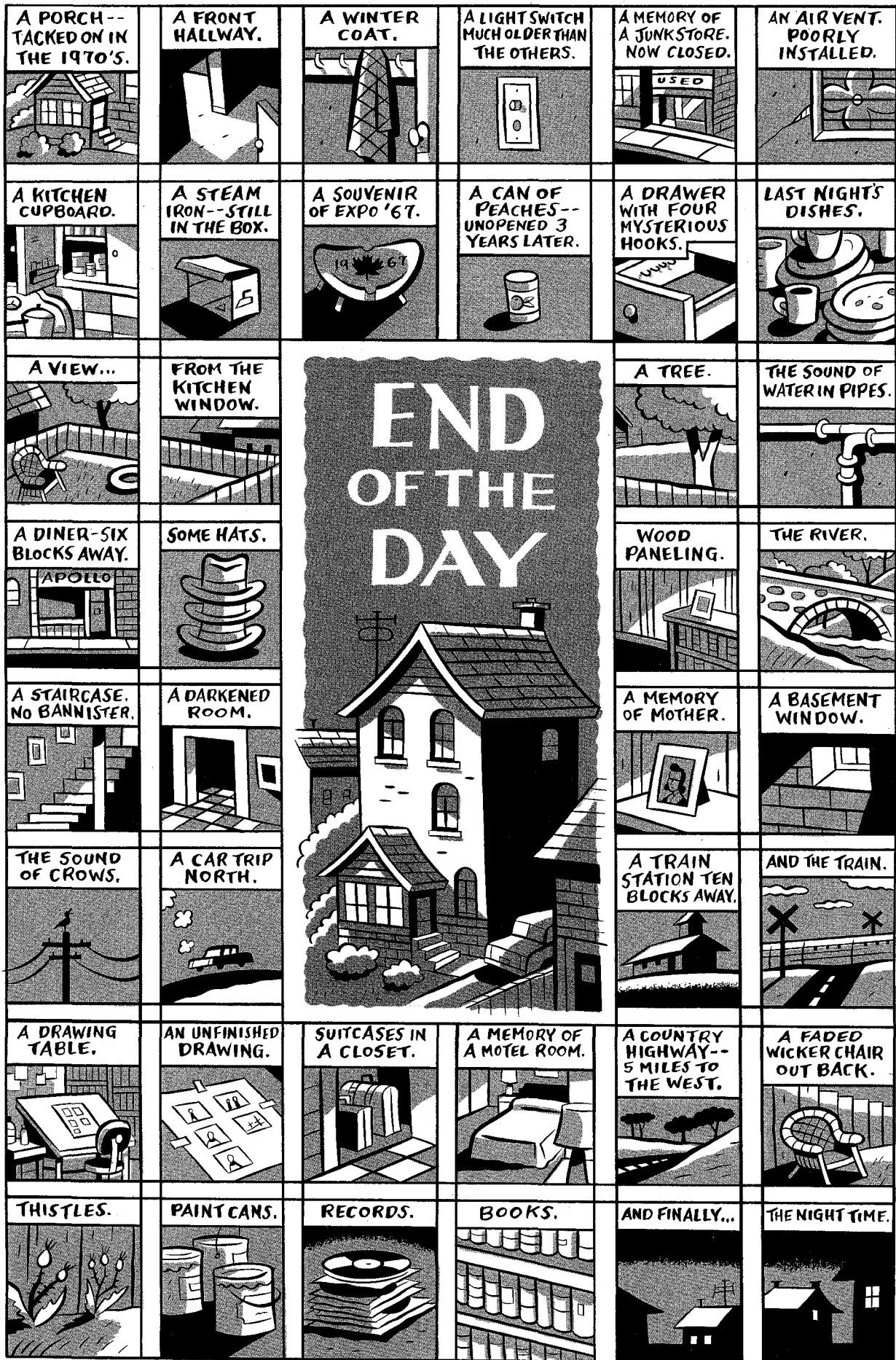
AS I LAY IN BED DRIFTING THROUGH VARIOUS STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS...	I GLANCED AROUND FOR SOMETHING TO READ.	NEXT TO THE BED WAS A STACK OF "BELL" COMICS I HAD JUST PURCHASED AT A YARSALE.	IF YOU'RE NOT FAMILIAR WITH "BELL," THEY PUBLISHED SUCH COMICS AS "FATSY" AND "MONEYBAGS!"	EVEN AS A CHILD I HAD NOT MUCH CARED FOR THESE COMICS.
HOWEVER, AS I READ THROUGH THEM I FOUND MYSELF COMPLETELY ENGROSSED.	I WAS SURPRIZED HOW INTERESTING THESE INANE STORIES WERE TO ME.	THEY HAD A PREDICTABLE QUALITY THAT WAS QUITE FASCINATING.	ESSENTIALLY, WITH A FEW MINOR VARIATIONS, EACH STORY WAS THE SAME AS THE LAST.	THE CHARACTERS WERE DEFINED BY A SINGLE PERSONALITY TRAIT.
"MONEYBAG'S" LOVE OF MONEY.	"SLUGGER'S" ENORMOUS STRENGTH.	OR "FATSY'S" OBSESSION WITH FOOD.	YET SOMEHOW THEY CAME OFF AS LIVELY AND CHARMING.	I POLISHED OFF THE STACK IN NO TIME AND WAS HUNGRY FOR MORE.
LATER, WHEN I WAS WELL, I WENT IN SEARCH OF MORE "BELL" COMICS.	I EASILY ACQUIRED ANOTHER STACK.	BUT THIS TIME I FOUND THEM HORRIBLY TIRESOME.	I COULD BARELY GET THROUGH THEM.	WONDERING IF THE 1ST STACK HAD BEEN BETTER CRAFTED-- I REREAD THOSE.
THEY HAD ALSO CEASED TO BE INTERESTING. THEY'D BECOME DULL!	WHAT HAD OCCURRED?	THE MOST OBVIOUS ANSWER IS THAT MY FEVERED BRAIN HAD BEEN STUPEFIED.	IT HAD MANUFACTURED SOMETHING IN THEM THAT WASN'T THERE.	BUT I DON'T THINK THAT'S THE CASE.
I THINK WITH MY FEVER, MY BRAIN HAD BEEN IN A SLOWER STATE.	MORE OPEN TO APPRECIATE THE DULL QUALITIES OF THOSE COMIC BOOKS.	THAT'S WHEN I REALIZED...	THERE'S A THIN LINE BETWEEN BORING AND INTERESTING.	END

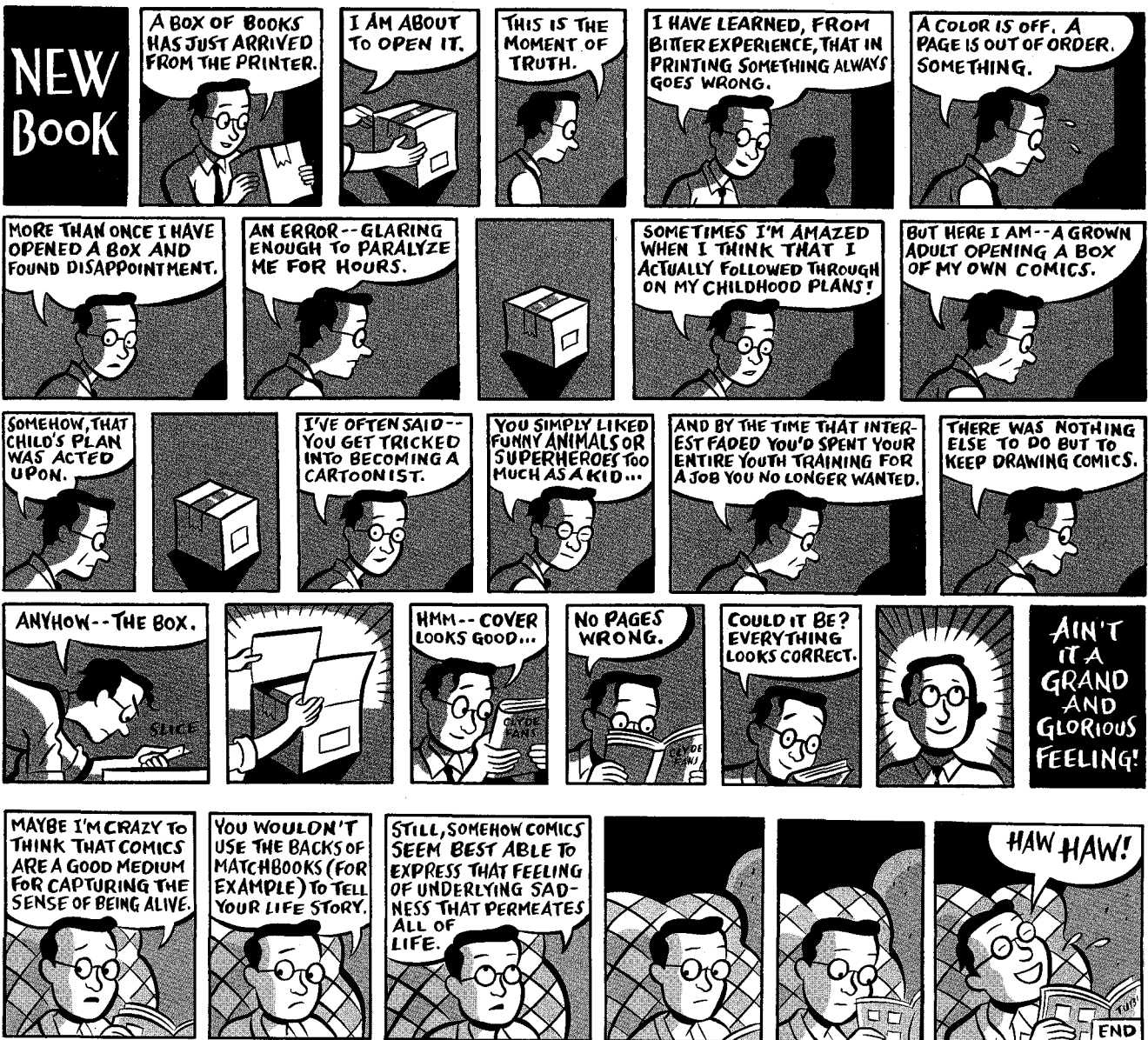
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<i>Alex Ross</i>	164	MUSICAL EVENTS <i>James Levine in Boston.</i>
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DRAWINGS *David Sipress, Jack Ziegler, Michael Shaw, Harry Bliss, Christopher Weyant, Frank Cotham, P. C. Vey, P. S. Mueller, Mick Stevens, Lee Lorenz, Matthew Diffie, Sam Gross, Leo Cullum, J. C. Duffy, Tom Cheney, Bruce Eric Kaplan, John Kane, William Haefeli, Michael Crawford, Charles Barsotti, Drew Dernavich, Mike Twohy, George Booth, Victoria Roberts, Michael Maslin, Robert Mankoff, Tom Hachtman, Barbara Smaller, Danny Shanahan, Pat Byrnes*



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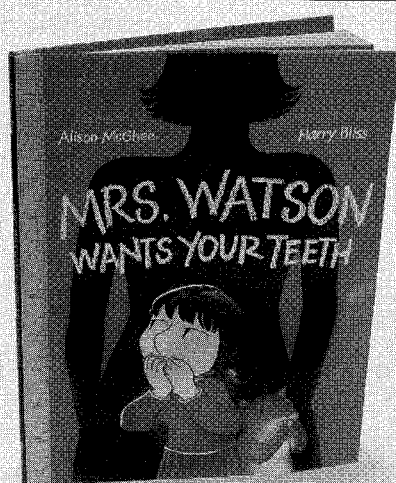
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two front teeth.



ALISON MCGHEE
Illustrated by HARRY BLISS

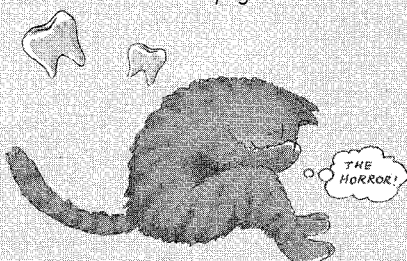
With the same sweet wit of their first book, *Countdown to Kindergarten*, Alison McGhee and Harry Bliss take a hilarious bite out of the most common fears about growing up.

"Bliss's artwork gives the story additional buzz, like a shot of espresso... hitting toothy notes that sit comfortably between Charles Schulz and Charles Addams."

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—Bookpage



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THE MAIL

PARSING THE PENTATEUCH

John Updike, in his review of Robert Alter's new translation of the Five Books of Moses, complains that it lacks the poetry of the King James Version, which he clearly loves (*Books*, November 1st). Nonetheless, it also lacks the many mis-translations inherited from the Vulgate, such as the one that Updike acknowledges—the "horns" on the head of Moses when he descended from Mt. Sinai with the Ten Commandments. Given the uses to which the mistakes have been put, it might be time to value accuracy over poetry, at least in this document which so many people take literally.

Natalie D. Segal
Wethersfield, Conn.

Neither the King James Bible nor Alter's translation of the Pentateuch expresses a detail of the Hebrew text which has been pointed out by Robert Graves and Raphael Patai: in the second verse of Genesis, the word "*ruach*," in the phrase "*ruach elohim*" (translated as "Spirit of God" in the old version), is a feminine word. Thus the spirit of the Lord is, in name at least, a female spirit.

Herman van Norden
Vancouver, B.C.

BODY POLITIC

The photograph of the naked ACT UP members in Richard Avedon's photo-essay was one of the last works by a great master of photography (*Portfolio*, November 1st). But that doesn't justify your decision to print it in a mass-circulation magazine that children can see in school libraries and medical offices and on their parents' coffee tables. Conservative readers look forward to your thoughtful editorial content, only to be offended by such "art." As the Election Night mandates clearly showed, conservative values are still alive and well in America. The inclusion of that photograph illustrates how out of touch you are with the values of many of your readers.

Frank Laird
San Diego, Calif.

LIFE AT THE SYNDICATE

As Edward Stratemeyer's great-granddaughter and a former "Nancy Drew" ghostwriter, I was pleased to see Meghan O'Rourke's article on the Stratemeyer Syndicate (*A Critic at Large*, November 8th). But I was dismayed by her characterization of the syndicate as a "fiction factory," and particularly by the lurking implication that the ghostwriters on the various series were exploited. While O'Rourke does allow that all the scenarios, characters, and plots originated with Stratemeyer, it cannot be emphasized enough that all incoming text was heavily edited and often extensively rewritten by Stratemeyer and his daughters. Meanwhile, the picture of Stratemeyer as an officebound overseer of operations is misleading. The bulk of his work was done at home, where he wrote a disciplined minimum of seventy-five hundred words a day.

BLESSING J.F.K.

I read Louis Menand's piece on the inauguration of John F. Kennedy with great interest, since a member of my family was also a participant (*Books*, November 8th). In December, 1960, my uncle, Dr. Nelson Glueck, then the president of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, received a call from Senator John Sparkman, the head of Kennedy's inaugural planning committee. Sparkman asked, "Are you a Republican or a Democrat?" Not knowing who was calling, my uncle said, "Why are you asking?" "Because the President-elect would like you to offer the benediction at his inaugural." "In that case, I'm a Democrat!"

Rabbi Jonathan M. Brown
Winchester, Va.

Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number via e-mail to themail@newyorker.com. They can also be faxed to 212-286-5047. Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published in any medium. All letters become the property of *The New Yorker* and will not be returned; we regret that owing to the volume of correspondence we cannot reply to every letter.

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**"A TRIUMPHANT,
STIRRING PORTRAIT..."**

**LIAM NEESON
IS EXTRAORDINARY...**

**A MAGNETIC,
SPELLBINDING
PERFORMANCE."**

Dennis Dermody,
PAPER

**"LAURA LINNEY
GIVES A
CHARISMATIC AND
EMOTIONALLY DEEP
PERFORMANCE."**

Michael Wilmington,
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

**"'KINSEY' IS LIKELY TO
BE THE BEST-RECEIVED
FILM OF ITS KIND SINCE
'A BEAUTIFUL MIND.'
LIAM NEESON GIVES
AN OSCAR-WORTHY
PERFORMANCE."**

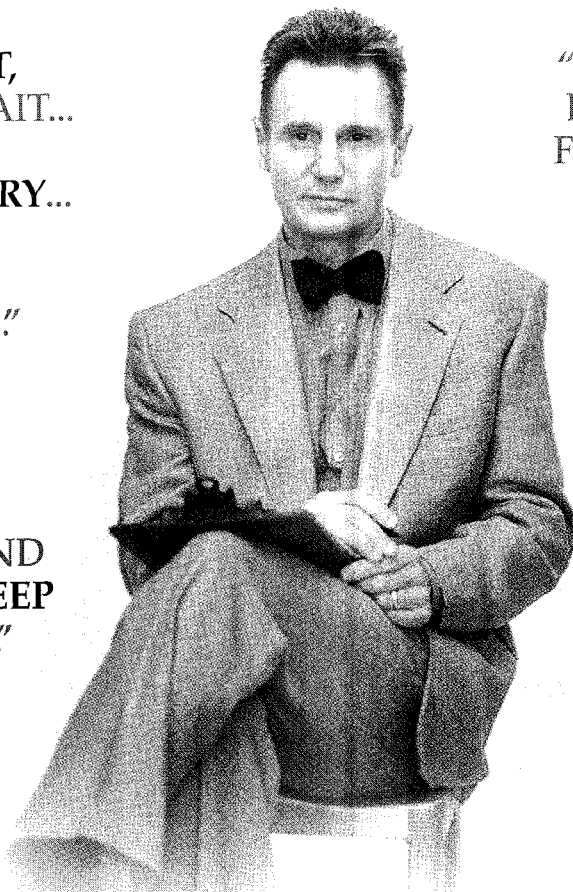
Roger Ebert,
CHICAGO SUN-TIMES

**"'KINSEY' IS
A KNOCKOUT."**

Peter Travers,
ROLLING STONE

"BOLD AND WITTY."

Karen Durbin,
ELLE



LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX



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Liam Neeson Laura Linney Peter Sarsgaard

KINSEY

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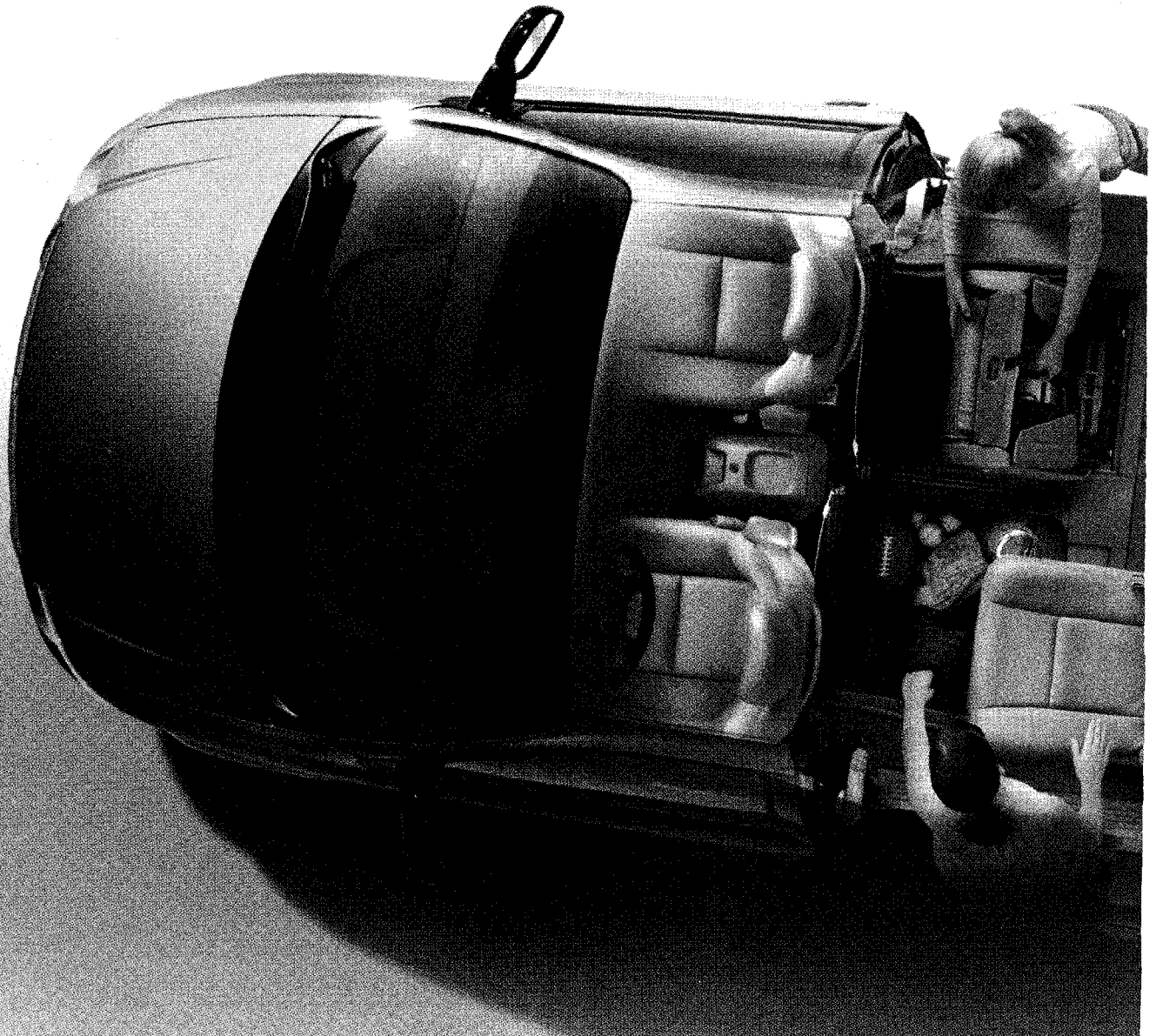
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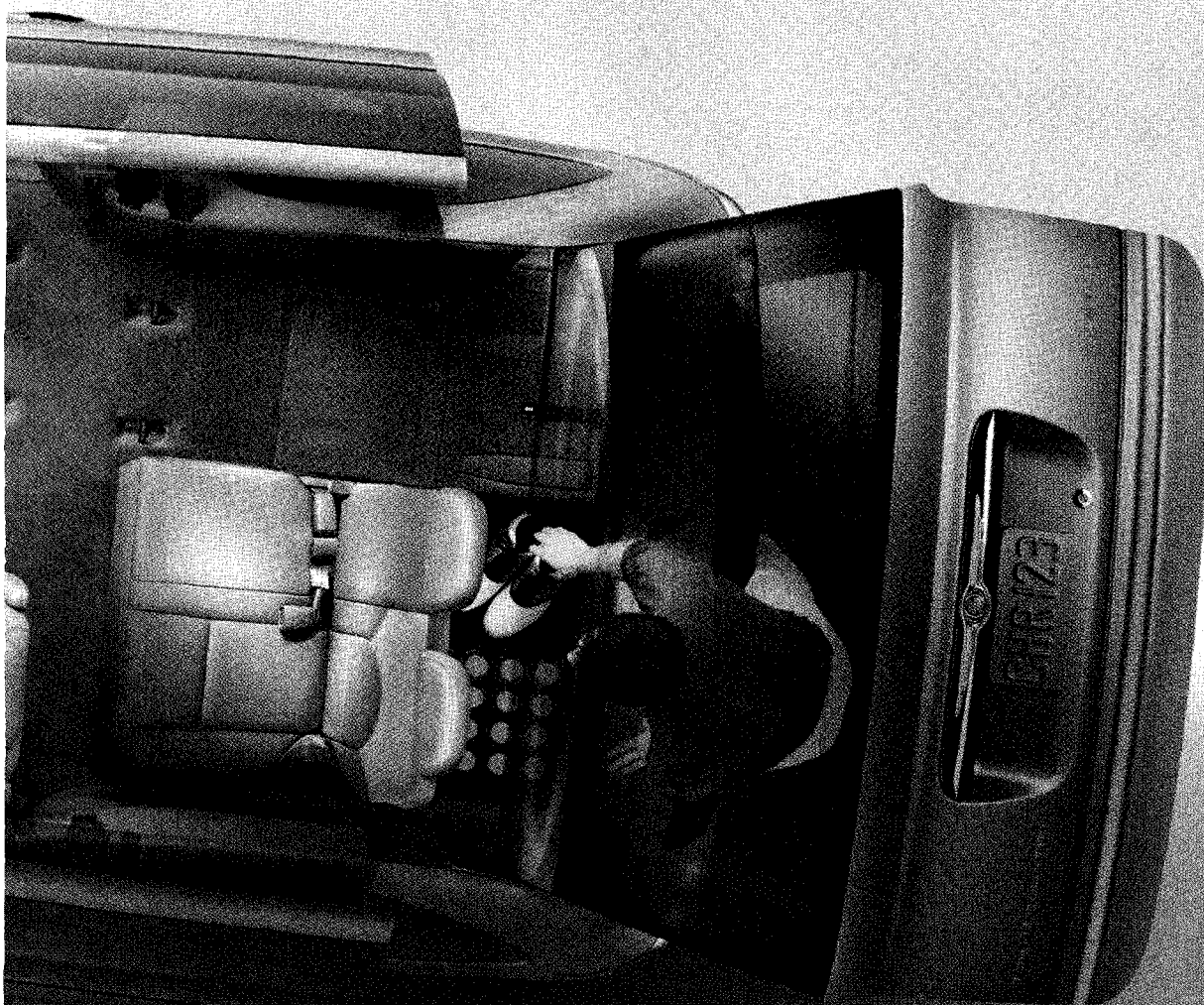
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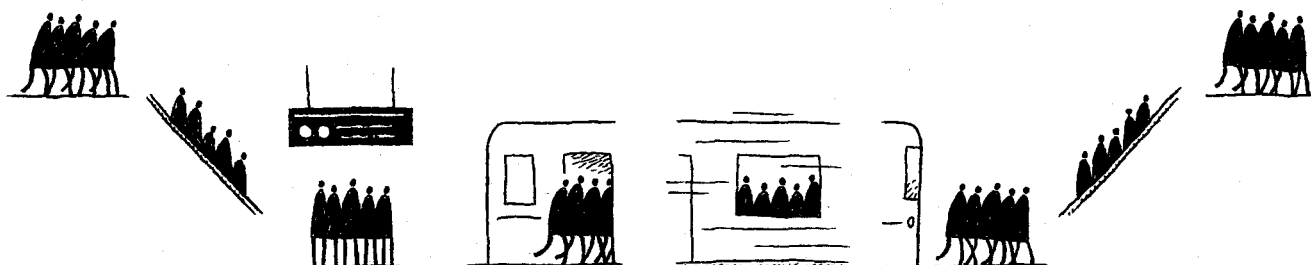


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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN



S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

For expanded events listings, please visit www.newyorker.com/goingson.

THIS WEEK TENOR, ANYONE?

There have been other tenor saxophonists since Coleman Hawkins, but his spirit returns every time a tenor player lifts a horn to his lips. Hawkins, who would have turned a hundred this month, practically invented the instrument, which has come to symbolize jazz for most contemporary listeners. His hard tone and harmonically sophisticated improvisation created the mold that all tenor stylists either embrace or

consciously break. Although both the veteran George Coleman and the younger player Eric Alexander are beboppers, Hawkins's swing aesthetic pervades their work. The two, along with the pianist Harold Mabern and other guests, pay tribute to "Bear" this week at Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola. (Through Nov. 28; see *Night Life*.)

MOONSTRUCK

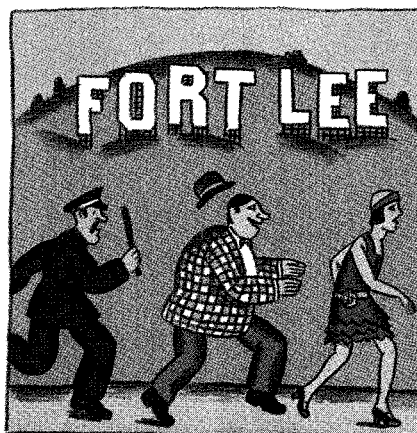
After the guitarist and singer Dean Wareham disbanded Galaxie 500, in the early nineties, he started Luna, which emulated classic New York bands like Television and the Velvet Underground. Band members came and went, but Wareham's songwriting rarely faltered. Luna's newly released record, "Rendezvous," is its last. (Irving Plaza, Nov. 27; see *Night Life*.)

HOLLYWOOD ON THE HUDSON

A retrospective of films made in Fort Lee, New Jersey, may sound like a bad joke, but this small town across the Hudson River from Manhattan was the place where early film pioneers, including D. W. Griffith and Maurice Tourneur, set up shop. A series currently at Moving Image boasts many fascinating rarities, including "The Golf Specialist," W. C. Fields's first talkie, in which he performs his vaudeville act; and "The Great Adventure," a 1918 film by Alice-Guy Blaché, an early female director. Within a few years, the film community had moved to Astoria, Queens (it saved them a ferry ride to work), and then, eventually, to a new town in Southern California. (Through Dec. 12; see *Movies*.)



The venerable downtown rock band Luna plays Irving Plaza.



The film history of Fort Lee, New Jersey, at Moving Image.



A tribute to Coleman Hawkins, at Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola.



TEN FINGERS. EIGHTY-EIGHT KEYS. HE'S MORE OF
A PRESTIDIGITATOR
THAN HE IS A PIANIST.

There are concert pianists, chamber pianists and recital pianists. And then there is Emanuel Ax. One man who embodies everything piano. More comfortable in jeans than concert tails, Manny, as he prefers to be called, is the fellow next door who just happens to be a musical genius. He's in constant demand by orchestras around the world. He plays the classics as if they were written for him. But he's also an energetic supporter of modern composers, recently giving three world premieres. Emanuel is living proof that when you love what you do, the results are magical.




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NEW YORK



"Darling, this is not a shoe. This is a cry for help, my possum." ("Dame Edna: Back with a Vengeance," at the Music Box.)

THE THEATRE OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

LA CAGE AUX FOLLES

A revival of Jerry Herman and Harvey Fierstein's musical about a gay couple who disguise themselves as husband and wife. Gary Beach and Daniel Davis lead the cast. Directed by Jerry Zaks. In previews. (Marquis, Broadway at 46th St. 212-279-4100.)

FAT PIG

A man tries to muster the courage to date an overweight woman, in a new play by Neil LaBute that stars Jeremy Piven, Ashlie Atkinson, Keri Russell, and Andrew McCarthy. Directed by Jo Bonney. In previews. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200.)

GEM OF THE OCEAN

Phylicia Rashad stars in the New York premiere of the ninth play in August Wilson's ten-play chronicle of the African-American experience. Directed by Kenny Leon. In previews. (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

A NUMBER

Sam Shepard—in his first stage appearance in thirty years—stars in Caryl Churchill's new play about

the moral repercussions of human cloning. In previews. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200.)

PACIFIC OVERTURES

B. D. Wong stars in the Roundabout's revival of the 1976 Sondheim musical (book by John Weidman) about the impact that American culture has had on Japanese society since Commodore Perry landed in Japan in 1853. Directed by Amon Miyamoto. In previews. (Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300.)

THE RIVALS

Mark Lamos directs a revival of Richard Brinsley Sheridan's comedy of manners, starring Brian Murray, Emily Bergl, Richard Easton, Matt Letscher, and Dana Ivey, as Mrs. Malaprop. Previews begin Nov. 26. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

RODNEY'S WIFE

Playwrights Horizons presents a new play written and directed by Richard Nelson, set in 1962, in which an aging film star and his wife have a relationship breakdown in Rome. With David Strathairn, as Rodney, Maryann Plunkert, as his wife, and Haviland Morris, as his meddling sister. In previews. (416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

700 SUNDAYS

Billy Crystal makes his Broadway debut in a play about his life. Written by Crystal, with additional material by Alan Zweibel. Directed by Des McAnuff. In previews. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

BELLE ÉPOQUE

A new work by Martha Clarke and Charles L. Mee imagines the life of Toulouse-Lautrec (Mark Povinelli) at the Moulin Rouge. Directed by Clarke. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

BROOKLYN: THE MUSICAL

This mishmash of Horatio Alger and "Star Search" tells the improbable tale of a Parisian orphan named Brooklyn who comes to New York (speaking Brooklynese, not French) on a quest for fame and the father she never knew and is welcomed by the city's homeless population. Directed by Jeff Calhoun. (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

DAME EDNA: BACK WITH A VENGEANCE!

The vivacious and vicious Australian housewife and talk-show host (a.k.a. Barry Humphries) presents a new show that includes psychic readings of audience members. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

DANNY AND THE DEEP BLUE SEA

John Patrick Shanley's 1984 play, now in revival at Second Stage, is a short, sweet evocation of the pain that comes from feeling disconnected from other people, and the pain that comes from making a genuine connection. Two angry people, a despairing woman (Rosemarie DeWitt) and a confused man (Adam Rothenberg), meet in a bar, share their deepest secrets, and then try to figure out how to cope with the fact that they care about each other. Well played by the actors, who bring across their characters' humor and fragility. Directed by Leigh Silverman. (307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

DAVE GORMAN'S GOOGLEWHACK!

ADVENTURE

In his newest spiel (which the Overlook Press has released as a book), the British monologist riffs on his recent journey across the globe, tracking the authors of "Googlewhacks"—aberrant Internet oddities in which two strange words, when combined in a search query, produce only one hit. The number of Googlewhacks has been on the decline since Mr. Gorman began his investigation, several years ago: when he first went on the hunt, "pomegranate filibusters" and "dork turnspit" both qualified; now, thanks to his mischief, both combinations yield multiple hits. (Village Theatre, 158 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100.)

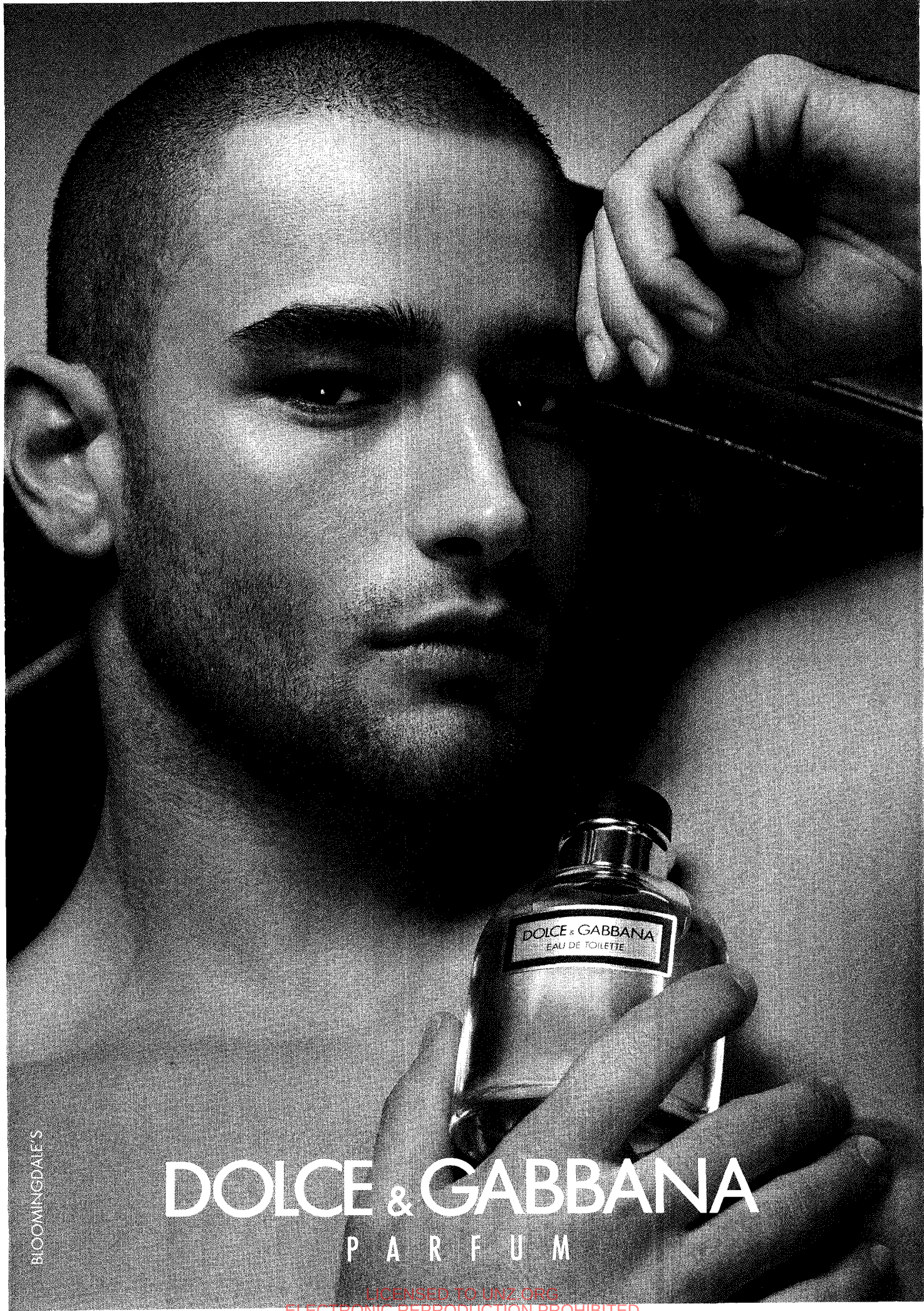
DEATH AND THE PLOUGHMAN

In this play by Johannes von Saaz, written in 1401, a grief-stricken widower (Will Bond) confronts Death (Stephen Webber) as if he were a criminal and excoriates him for killing his wife. "Why have you torn up the meadow of my delight?" he rails. But Death won't accept guilt, and the dead wife (Ellen Lauren) refuses to assign blame. "Each man must give his life to Death, his body to earth, and his soul to God," she says, impassive. In SITI Company's staging, Death, wearing a bowler hat, looks like Steed from "The Avengers," and sacred choral music alternates with Delta blues and music-hall tunes. It is not clear that these concessions to modernity were needed: von Saaz's metaphysical concerns are ageless, and Michael West's translation deftly conveys the playwright's poetic voice. (Classic Stage, 136 E. 13th St. 212-279-4200.)

DEMOCRACY

A strong production of Michael Frayn's play about the popular German Chancellor Willy Brandt (James Naughton), his embattled Administration, and the East German mole Günter Guillaume (Richard Thomas), who served him and eventually sank him, when his identity was exposed. Watching the all-male, business-suited cast animate a raft of names that only Cold War historians know anymore—Horst Ehmke, Herbert Wehner, Arno Kretschmann—gives peculiar satisfaction: it's as if the gray pages of *Wer Ist Wer*—the German *Who's Who*—were to come to life before your eyes in unsuspected color and vitality. Thomas is excellent as Guillaume, whose faith in Brandt and faithlessness to him were hopelessly entangled. With an effective two-story set by Peter J. Davison, linked by a

MICHAEL CRAWFORD



BLOOMINGDALE'S

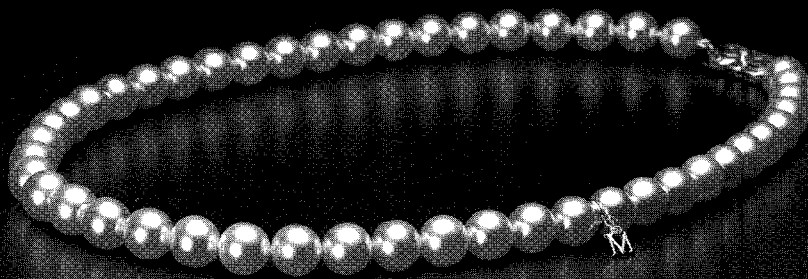
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spiral staircase. Directed by Michael Blakemore. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-4100.)

DIMPFO DI KOPANE

The South African lyric-theatre company—whose name means “combined talents” in Sotho—offers four repertory productions. “Yiimimangalisio” (“The Mysteries”) is an irreverent take on the medieval Chester cycle that captures, through an eclectic mix of four languages, loud drums, and traditional and modern African dress, something of the chaotic nature of township life. Andries Mbali shines as the Devil in red pleather. Also playing is “U-Carmen” (“Carmen”), “Ibali loo-Tsotsi” (“The Beggar’s Opera”) and “IKumkanikazi yeKhephu” (“The Snow Queen”). (Synod Hall, Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. 212-581-1212. Through Nov. 28.)

DOUBT

In a new play by John Patrick Shanley, set in the nineteen-sixties at a Catholic school in the Bronx, a nun (Cherry Jones) worries that a priest (Brian F. O’Byrne) is too close to a male student. Directed by Doug Hughes. (Manhattan Theatre Club at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

EYE-OLUTION

A play by Hilary Illick and Jennifer Krier (based on their experiences) interweaves the stories of two women who are struggling to retain their sense of self while raising a family. This show knows its audience; it has no surprises, but plenty of heart. Directed by Carolyn Cantor. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 212-239-6200.)

FIVE BY TENN

At the opening of this evening of short plays by Tennessee Williams, two of which have never been staged, Jeremy Lawrence, coyly identified in the program as “The Writer,” stands in front of the audience and drawls, “My characters build the play about them like spiders weaving their webs, sea creatures making their shells.” As he speaks, the characters of the evening emerge around him like apparitions, echo a few lines from their respective plays, then disappear. The staging shrewdly suggests the nature of Williams’s hauntedness and of his playwriting: a sort of séance in which the author channels both himself and the projections of others. In this collection, well conceived by the director Michael Kahn, who originated the show in Washington, D.C., with the Shakespeare Theatre, the plays are not first-rate but finger exercises, which nonetheless have a powerful appeal. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/22/04.) (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE FOREIGNER

Larry Shue’s chestnut about a shy Brit named Charlie who spends three days in a hillbilly hide-away is given delirious life by the physical clowning of Matthew Broderick (as Charlie), by Byron Jennings, as his chum “Froggy” LeSueur (in kneesocks and khaki shorts), and especially by Kevin Cahoon, as a half-wit named Ellard, whose goggle-eyed loopiness gives Don Knotts a run for his money. Cahoon and Broderick make a splendid comedy team, and their antics (such as a post-breakfast dance in which they use juice cups as fezzes) set the audience howling. With fine performances also by Frances Sternhagen and Mary Catherine Garrison. Directed by Scott Schwartz. (Roundabout at Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

THE GOD OF HELL

In a play by Sam Shepard inspired by the Bush Administration, an evil government official harasses a Midwestern farm couple. Directed by Lou Jacob. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Actors Studio Drama School Theatre, 151 Bank St. 212-279-4200.)

THE GOOD BODY

Eve Ensler follows up “The Vagina Monologues” with this yenta’s yarn about women’s body-image issues and male ideals of feminine beauty. Baring her stomach and her soul, she fires off jokes through a number of characters, including her cold mother (“My mother didn’t see me. She saw acne”) and her abusive father. For her, fattening up was a form of rebellion, a wall of protection, and a way to avoid intimacy. The director, Peter Askin, fleshes out the set with Segal-like figures, which indi-

cates that, whatever her weight, Ensler can't quite fill the stage. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

GUANTÁNAMO:

HONOR BOUND TO DEFEND FREEDOM

A verbatim-theatre piece—in the style of “The Exonerated”—that mingles interviews of detainees at Guantánamo Bay with letters, transcripts of political speeches, and lawyers’ briefs. Written by Victoria Brittain and Gillian Slovo. Directed by Nicolas Kent and Sacha Wares. (45 Bleecker Theatre, at 45 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100.)

THE IMMIGRANT

Haskell Harelik (the exceptional Adam Heller) comes to America in 1909 through the port of Galveston, Texas. While selling fruit from a cart, he meets a couple of prominent local citizens, Ima and Milton Perry (Cass Morgan and Walter Charles), who befriend Harelik and back his banana business. Eventually, Harelik’s wife (Jacqueline Antaramian) comes from Russia to join him, and they become pillars of the community. It’s a simple, resonant American tale, and it’s also true: the immigrant was the grandfather of the playwright, Mark Harelik. With an appropriately folksy score by Sarah Knapp (lyrics) and Steven M. Alper (music), and a big-sky set by Brian Webb and the lighting designer, Don Darnutzer. Directed by Randal Myler. (Dodger Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

JEWTOPIA

Dopey but not unenjoyable, Bryan Fogel and Sam Wolfson’s comedy about religious identity chronicles the romantic trials of two friends: Chris (Fogel), a Catholic who wants to marry a Jewish girl, and Adam (Wolfson), a Jew who *doesn’t* want to marry a Jewish girl. Packed with old and new Jewish jokes, the show has abundant visual humor, including a “Judaism for Dummies” manual and a Top Ten list of telltale Gentile traits that Chris should avoid (No. 1: “Be in perfect health”). Directed by John Tillinger. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 212-239-6200.)

MARRIAGE

The Pearl Theatre Company presents Gogol’s rarely performed 1833 play about a woman who is wooed by four suitors. Directed by Jesse Berger. (The show runs in repertory with “The Imaginary Invalid.”) (80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802.)

MOVIN’ OUT

Twyla Tharp’s dance-drama (to songs by Billy Joel), about small-town teen-agers during the Vietnam War era, has acquired a new head of steam with the addition of Nancy Lemenager and Desmond Richardson to the cast, in the roles of the lovers Brenda and Tony. Neither is a great actor, and neither looks like a teen-ager, but teen-agers can’t dance on this level. Richardson, in particular, should get an award. (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-239-6200.)

'NIGHT, MOTHER

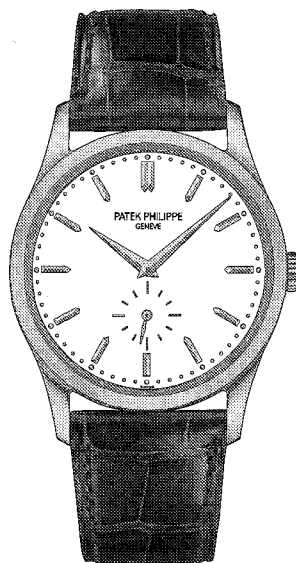
Too often, Marsha Norman’s 1983 Pulitzer Prize-winning play—about the evening that a young woman and her mother spend together after the daughter announces that she’s going to kill herself—is played as screechy or sloppily sentimental. Here, though, Brenda Blethyn and Edie Falco give understated performances that lend the story uncommon realism. Directed by Michael Mayer. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

9 PARTS OF DESIRE

Heather Raffo’s remarkable one-woman show, which bears witness to Iraqi women’s political oppression, is an example of how art can remake the world and eloquently name pain. Based on research and dozens of interviews conducted on four continents over eleven years (Raffo portrays nine women in the course of the evening), the play brings news of the psychic life of the brutalized and allows us to think about the unthinkable. Directed by Joanna Settle. (11/8/04) (Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, 55 Mercer St. 212-239-6200.)

PEOPLE ARE WRONG!

This addled rock-and-folk musical, set on a stage covered in Astro-Turf, resembles a seventies-themed back-yard party with way too many hash brownies going around. *Yuppies* (John Flansburgh and Erin Hill) buy a country house, and freak out when

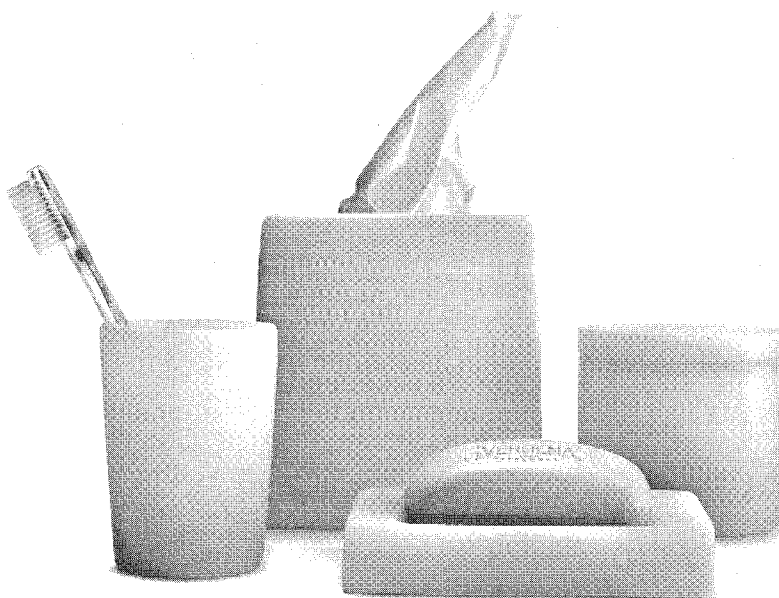


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their gardener, a Jesus Christ Superstar manqué named Xanthus (David Driver), turns their lawn into a launchpad for his spaceship. Fitfully directed by David Herskovits. (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 212-353-0303. Through Dec. 11.)

PUGILIST SPECIALIST

The Riot Group's psychological drama about four U.S. marines on a tense mission in the Middle East comes to 45 Below, the downstairs stage at 45 Bleecker St. Written by Adriano Shaplin. (212-352-3101. Through Nov. 28.)

A SECOND HAND MEMORY

A new play written and directed by Woody Allen is set in Brooklyn in the nineteen-fifties and stars Dominic Chianese, Beth Fowler, Elizabeth Marvel, and others. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE SECRET AGENT

David Willinger's adaptation of Conrad's novel about terrorism moves the action from London a hundred years ago to New York after 9/11. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-254-1109.)

SVEJK

Colin Teevan's superb adaptation of Jaroslav Hašek's "The Good Soldier Svejk," presented by Theatre for a New Audience, is a tale of the First World War literally told by an idiot. Here, on a set that seems painted by Franz Kline in his cups, tortuous thick black lines demark Gideon Davey's wonderful tilted set, on which chairs and a typewriter are nailed to the side of the proscenium and two behemoth pen nibs have been set at bold angles like spears thrown into a Cubist nightmare. Stephen Spinella plays Svejk with wit and sweetness, making him a compelling fool—a sort of clown of carnage—who rebounds from every insane situation with his humanity intact and the world's barbarity exposed. "It's a great advantage to the farmers, when their fields are covered with the dust of an entire regiment," he says. The giddiness of Hašek's despair is elegantly staged by Dalia Ibelhauptaite, who keeps the excellent cast on their toes. (Duke on 42nd Street, 229 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

The Peccadillo Theatre Company presents a new musical about Dorothy Parker, Robert Benchley, Alexander Woollcott, and other Algonquin regulars. Book, lyrics, and music by Ginny Redington and Tom Dawes. Directed by Dan Wackerman. (Bank Street Theatre, 155 Bank St. 212-868-4444. Through Dec. 5.)

TRYING

In a touching, traditional drama by Joanna McClelland Glass, a determined young Canadian secretary (Kati Brazda) with a passion for Wallace Stevens tries to straighten out the paperwork of a crotchety lawmaker, Francis Biddle (Fritz Weaver). Directed by Sandy Shinner. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 212-239-6200.)

WHOOPI

Whoopi Goldberg returns to Broadway with a new production of the show that launched her career. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

WONDERFUL TOWN

Brooke Shields has joined the cast of the buoyant, beautifully staged revival of the musical from 1953, about two spirited Ohio sisters' adventures in Greenwich Village. (Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

ALSO PLAYING

AVENUE Q

Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 212-307-4747.

BLUE MAN GROUP

Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 212-254-4370.

BOMBAY DREAMS

Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200.

BUG

Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St., at Seventh Ave. 212-239-6200.

CHICAGO

Ambassador, 215 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.

DRACULA, THE MUSICAL

Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

FIDDLER ON THE ROOF

Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 212-307-4100.

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY

Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.

42ND STREET

Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.

GOLDA'S BALCONY

Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

HAIRSPRAY

Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100.

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THE IMAGINARY INVALID

Pearl, 60 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802.

THE LION KING

New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.

MAMMA MIA!

Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-563-5544.

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

THE PRODUCERS

St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

RENT

Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 212-921-8000.

ROMEO & JULIET

Bouwerie Lane, 330 Bowery at Bond St. 212-279-4200.

SLAVA'S SNOWSHOW

Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 212-505-0700.

STOMP

Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 212-477-2477.

SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE

Dodger Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.

TWELVE ANGRY MEN

American Airlines, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.

WHITE CHOCOLATE

Century Center for the Performing Arts, 111 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.

WICKED

Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-307-4100.

DANCE

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In Balanchine's "Nutcracker," the Christmas party is gemütlich, the nightmare scary, the tree tall, and Candyland just what it should be: a child's dream of heaven. Tchaikovsky wrote the music at the peak of his powers as a fabulist, and Balanchine's imagination rose to meet it. (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-870-5570. Nov. 26 at 8, Nov. 27 at 2 and 8, and Nov. 28 at 1 and 5. Through Jan. 2.)

"FOREVER TANGO"

Luis Bravo's evening of Argentine dance features fourteen dancers and an eleven-piece orchestra. The show has returned to the Shubert following a successful run this summer. (225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. Nov. 23 at 8, Nov. 24 and Nov. 26-27 at 2 and 8, and Nov. 28 at 3.)

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No choreographer has been more successful in expanding the expressive possibilities of hip-hop dance than Rennie Harris. But he's also devoted to his roots. This touring showcase is an offshoot of an annual conference he runs in Philadelphia that calls together the pioneers of hip-hop dance as a kind of high council of authenticity. The lineup includes the West Coast funksters Don Campbell (the creator of locking) and Boogaloo Sam (the creator of popping) and the Rock Steady Crew. DJ Evil Tracy mans the turntables,

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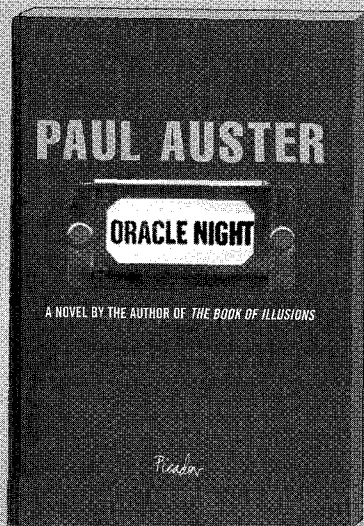
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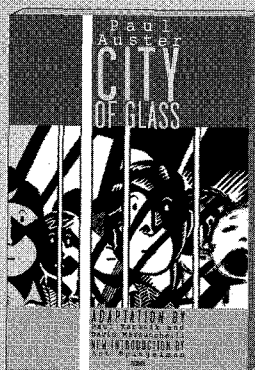


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CONTRIBUTORS

Jonathan Franzen ("The Comfort Zone," p. 66) is the author of "How to Be Alone," a collection of essays, which is out in paperback.

Philip Gourevitch (Comment, p. 57) is a staff writer. His latest book is "A Cold Case."

Jeff Tietz ("Fine Disturbances," p. 90) is a freelance writer whose work has appeared in *Harper's* and *The Atlantic Monthly*. He lives in Texas.

Janet Malcolm ("The Émigré," p. 110) is a staff writer. Her most recent book is "Reading Chekhov."

Roddy Doyle (Fiction, p. 118) has just published "Oh, Play That Thing," the second novel in the trilogy "The Last Roundup."

R. Crumb (Cover) has a new book, "R. Crumb Handbook," which will be published in March.

Robert Weber (Portfolio, p. 136) has been a *New Yorker* cartoonist since 1962.

David Sedaris ("Old Faithful," p. 106) has contributed to the magazine since 1995. This piece will be included in "Committed: Men Tell Stories of Love, Commitment, and Marriage," an anthology of new writing to be published by Bloomsbury in January.

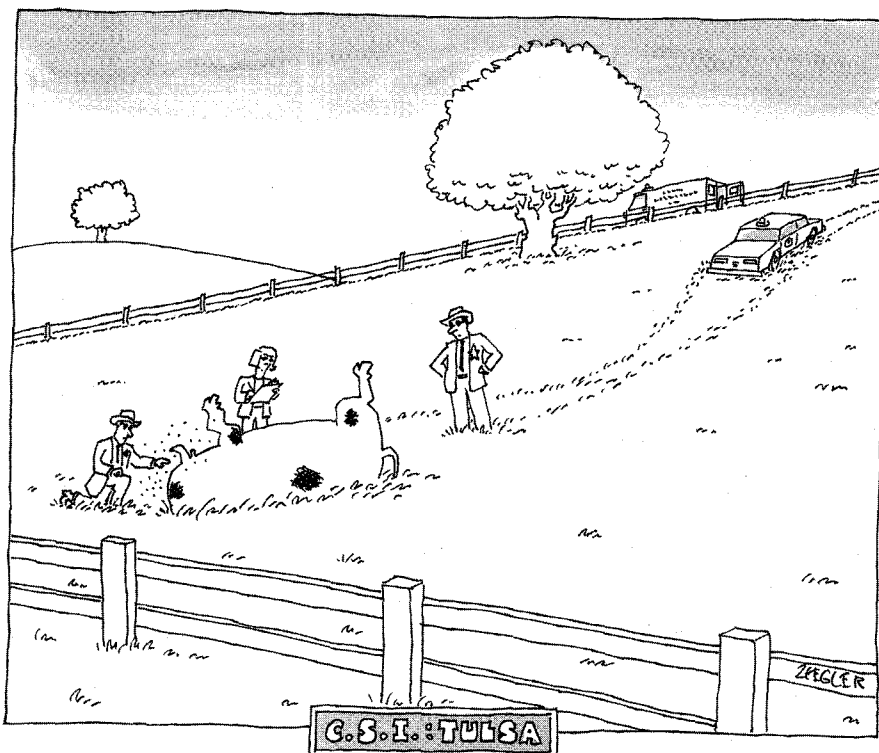
Roz Chast ("Better Than Chekhov," p. 132) is the author of, most recently, "The Party, After You Left."

Gahan Wilson (Sketchbook, p. 138) will publish "The Best of Gahan Wilson" next month.

Mike Shenk, Amy Goldstein, and Robert Leighton ("Picture This," p. 140) are partners in Puzzability, a puzzle-writing company they started in 1996.

Robert Gottlieb (A Critic at Large, p. 142) was the editor-in-chief of Alfred A. Knopf and, from 1987 to 1992, the editor of *The New Yorker*.

Elizabeth Kolbert (Books, p. 154) is the author of "The Prophet of Love: And Other Tales of Power and Deceit." ♦



TABLES FOR TWO



L'IMPERO

45 Tudor City Pl. (212-599-5045)—Tudor City is as strange a little appendix of New York City as you could ever hope to find: an elaborately artificial brick-and-stone neighborhood built in the nineteen-twenties to evoke the architecture of sixteenth-century England, elevated above Forty-second Street and looking over at the United Nations. So perhaps it shouldn't be surprising to find, under the antiquated street lights, L'Impero's beautiful slate courtyard—this time evoking nineteen-fifties Rome more than Hampton Court—with urns of dignified flowers, tables under canvas umbrellas, and a pastel-colored motorbike, which is most definitely a prop.

Inside, the colors are restrained chalk blues and chocolate browns and lacquered whites, and the food likewise has a subdued, expensive, sensitive quality. There are many dishes to recommend, though they change with the seasons: lately, there has been an earthy polenta served with a copper pot of mushroom gravy; a tasty rabbit ravioli; and a yellowtail appetizer with ginger oil and red onions. The yellowtail is superb, and the chef, Scott Conant, must realize its appeal: this fall he opened a restaurant in SoHo devoted to crudo, the Italian version of sushi. But L'Impero is, on the whole, less delicate. One signature entrée is the capretto (baby goat), large shingles of pinkish meat that fall from the bone to make a kind of stew with the potato and artichoke accompaniments. A free-range chicken, roasted with autumnal currants and almonds, is wonderfully comforting. A spicy pinot noir goes well with these heavier dishes, and can also carry you through to the cheese course. Anyone who tries to skip dessert will nevertheless be ambushed with a plate of petits fours, including a dense, mottled "chocolate salami" made from dates and nuts.

The one disruption to the mature, unexcitable mood is the weirdly rowdy, blue-lit bar area. But, before you know it, you are back in the quiet courtyard with the flowers and the motorbike, and an exuberant hostess is hailing you a cab to take you back down to the rest of the city. (Open Mondays through Saturdays for lunch and dinner. Entrées \$18-\$29.)

—Dana Goodyear

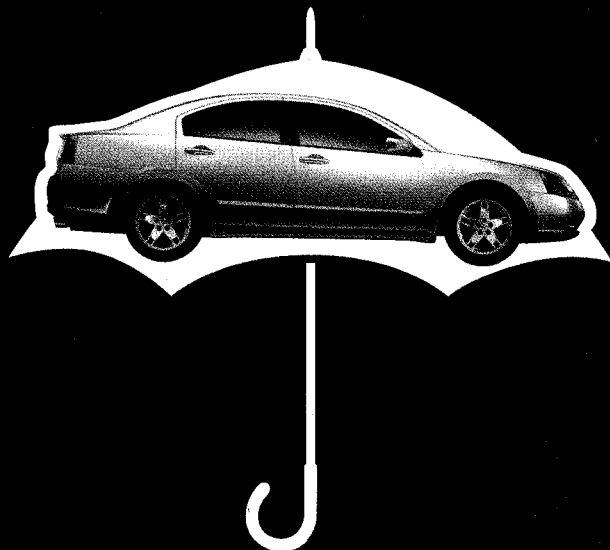
and Kenny Muhammad serves as a human beat box. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. Nov. 24 and Nov. 26-27 at 2 and 7 and Nov. 28 at 3.)

BALLET HISPÁNICO

Bringing in the choreographer Peter Pucci would seem a bold departure from Ballet Hispánico's usual formulas. Indeed, parts of Pucci's new "Eternamente y un Día"—the best parts—resemble nothing in the company's repertory. Most of the work, though, set to Mexican folk songs recorded by the Kronos Quartet, follows the dancers' stock exuberance down all too familiar paths. Two programs alternate this season: one pairs Pucci's dance with Ramón Oller's elegiac, Gypsy-themed "Bury Me Standing"; the other features last year's historical survey of Latin social dance, "Nightclub." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Nov. 30 at 7:30. Through Dec. 12.)

"FRESH TRACKS"

The biannual series, which introduced Molissa Fenley and Bill T. Jones, returns with an evening of solos and duets by six up-and-coming choreographers. The Merce Cunningham dancer Jonah Bokaer performs "RSVP," a study in folding and collapsing joints, set to a score that is generated by



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cell phones scattered throughout the audience. In the solo "Antigen," Malinda Allen extemporizes a dance of expressive calisthenics that evoke the workings of viruses, hormones, and human behavior. Other featured artists are Felicia Ballos, Jeremy Laverdure, Daniel Linehan, and the duo Yoko Sugimoto and Yuka Kikuchi. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Nov. 26-27 at 7:30.)

JAZZ TAP ENSEMBLE

Twenty-five years ago, the L.A.-based group helped introduce tap dance to the concert stage. Today, few such concert-tap companies survive, and the ensemble has become a pickup operation, yet the troupe's anniversary season at the Joyce confirms its continued success as an incubator of talent. Along with the fleet-footed mainstay Sam Weber, the roster includes the ferocious Dormeshia Sumbry-Edwards, who was a teenager when she joined, a decade ago, and the elegant Joseph Wiggan, who is a teen-ager still. Video footage of Gregory Hines anchors a tribute to the late dancer. With live musical accompaniment. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Nov. 23-24 at 8. Nov. 26-27 at 2 and 8, and Nov. 28 at 2 and 7:30.)

"I AM THE MOON AND YOU ARE THE MAN ON ME"

Julie Atlas Muz, the performance artist-cum-choreographer best known for her risqué mermaid act (performed in a saltwater tank), brings a "butoh burlesque" show to P.S. 122. (First Ave. at 10th St. 212-477-5288. Nov. 26-28 at 8.)

MOSCOW CLASSICAL BALLET

The Russian company, directed by Natalia Kasatkina and Vladimir Vasilyov, brings its production of "The Nutcracker" to New York for one performance. (Whitman Theatre, Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts, Brooklyn College. 718-951-4500. Nov. 28 at 3.)

NIGHT LIFE CONCERTS

HOOBASTANK

The hugely popular, inexplicably named Los Angeles modern-rock band. (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 212-307-7171. Nov. 24 at 7:30.)

MOE.

This jam band has performed literally hundreds of times each year since its inception, in the early nineties in Buffalo, New York. Now that Phish, the mother of all modern jam bands, is history, moe. is bringing its mix of country, rock, jazz, and funk to the masses. How hard will it be for the Phishheads to remake themselves as moe.rons? Not hard at all, given the way these boys play. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 212-307-7171. Nov. 26-27 at 7.)

O.A.R.

A few years ago, Marc Roberge, his childhood friend Chris Culos, and a few other musicians in the Washington, D.C., area started playing a mix of reggae and radio-ready rock. They went off to school at Ohio State University, added the saxophone player Jerry DePizzo, and are now approaching a Dave Matthews-sized grassroots following. (Hammerstein Ballroom. Nov. 26-27 at 7.)

ARLO GUTHRIE

Woody's son returns with his annual rendition of his counterculture anthem about a draft-eligible folksinger getting arrested in Housatonic, Massachusetts, on Thanksgiving. This year, he'll also be performing the long-lost Jewish songs of his father, Woody, which he wrote after his mother-in-law, Aliza Greenblatt, introduced him to Jewish culture in Coney Island during the nineteen-forties. With the Klezmatics and Susan McKeown. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Nov. 27 at 8.)

THE SIDNEY BECHET SOCIETY

The reed players Bob Wilber and Evan Christopher lead a jam session. (The Lighthouse, 111 E. 59th St. For more information, call 516-627-4468. Nov. 29 at 8:15.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BARBÈS

376 9th St., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-965-9177)—Nov. 26: Geraldine Celerier Eguiluz, a singer from Mexico City, performs songs by the Brazilian mystic Hermeto Pascoal, the Italian avant-garde composer Luciano Berio, and others.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL

237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—Nov. 24: The mysterious rapper MF Doom (as in "Metal Face Doom"), who wears, naturally, a metal mask. Nov. 25: Pinetop Perkins is in his nineties, but the pianist and veteran of Muddy Waters's band has yet to slow down. Nov. 26-27: Dr. John, whose gruff, back-porch take on R. & B. has been much imitated but never matched. In recent years he's turned out records focussing on Duke Ellington and rural Louisiana, but his latest album, "N'Awlinz: Dis Dat or d'Udda," is a star-studded tribute to the Big Easy. Nov. 30: The "American Idol" finalist Kimberly Locke.

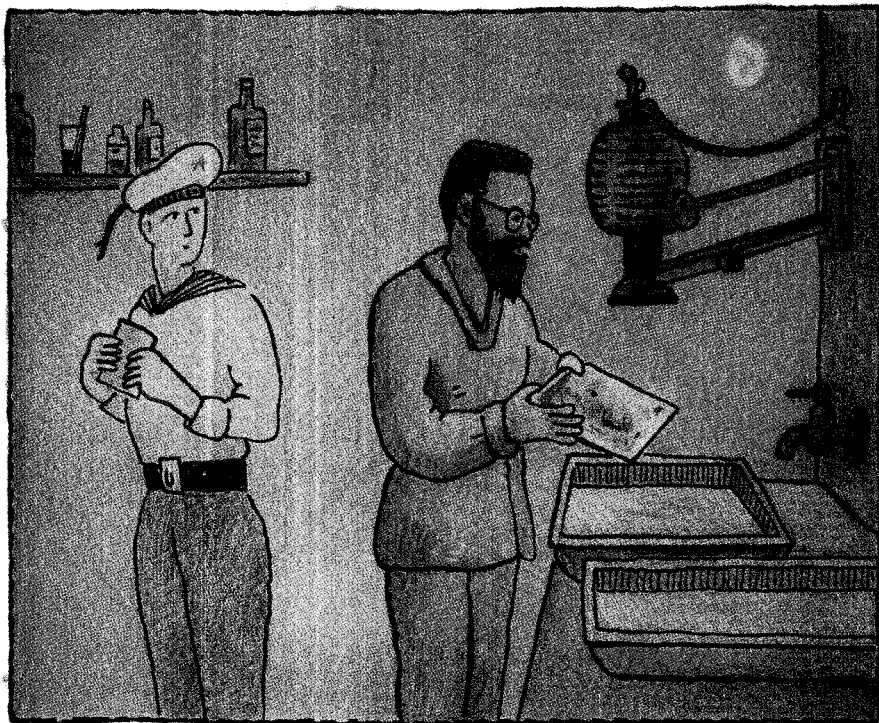
tinue to play their beloved genre of stripped-down, punked-up blues. Their new album is titled "Damage."

JOE'S PUB

425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Nov. 24: The local outfit Mosquitos plays fetching bossa-nova-influenced pop. Nov. 28: The Mexican singer-songwriter sensation Ely Guerra performs with an intensity that belies her petite frame.

NORTHSIX

66 N. 6th St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (718-599-5103)—Nov. 26: Bob Mould, once a member of the American punk band Hüsker Dü and of the celebrated alternative trio Sugar, took a break from music at the end of the nineties to fulfill his passion for professional wrestling. (No joke: he has served as a consultant to the World Championship Wrestling organization.) More recently, he started experimenting with electronic music, swapping guitars for samplers and synthesizers, and released an album under the name Loud-Bomb. On occasional Saturday nights he can be found at the 9:30 Club, in Washington, D.C., spinning records with the producer Richard Morel (together they use the name Blowoff). With Alex Dezen, of the Damnwells. Nov. 27: Oakland's Neurosis will never be the ideal wedding band,



"Care to see the photograph of Comrade Petrov before the goat was retouched out?" ("Staging Happiness," a show of socialist-realist photography at Nailya Alexander.)

FEZ

380 Lafayette St. (212-533-7000)—Nov. 29: Hamell on Trial. A thorny folk troubadour who traded in his Pete Seeger records for albums by Lou Reed and Iggy Pop, Ed Hamell delivers dicey urban narratives. With an admirable capacity for detail and the punchy delivery of the Jim Carroll Band circa "People Who Died," Hamell is both an ace storyteller and a credible rocker, which is no mean feat. The Charles Mingus Orchestra packs them in every Thursday.

IRVING PLAZA

17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—Nov. 24: The sharp Hammond-organ-driven retro jazz and funk of Soulive. Nov. 27: Luna (see This Week). Nov. 29: Shadows Fall, from Massachusetts, plays a joyless brand of progressive death metal. Their latest album, "War Within," could be just the thing for anyone in need of catharsis. Nov. 30: Blues Explosion. This long-running New York trio recently trimmed their name from the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, and they con-

but this experimental collective has evolved in its nineteen-year run. They once pummelled out gloomy alternative metal completely bereft of light or hope, but their more recent work approaches a stately middle ground between the grinding and the elegiac.

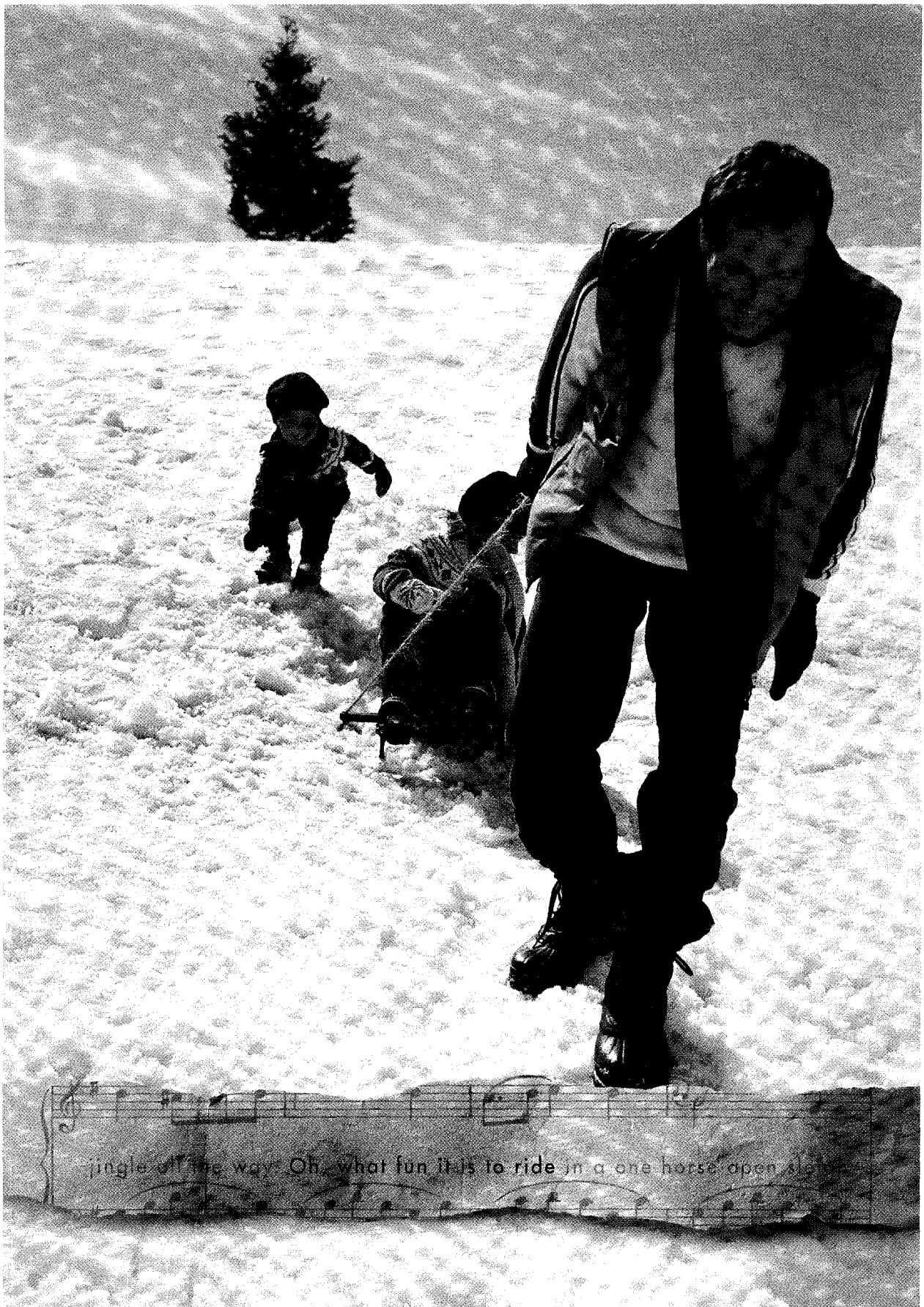
S.O.B.'S

204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (212-243-4940)—Nov. 26: The Haitian bad-boy singer Sweet Mickey. Nov. 29: The exceptional Cuban guitarist and singer Juan-Carlos Formell, the son of Los Van Van's leader, Juan Formell (and grandson of the noted arranger Francisco Formell). Nov. 30: The Southern California hip-hop group the Pharcyde.

WEBSTER HALL

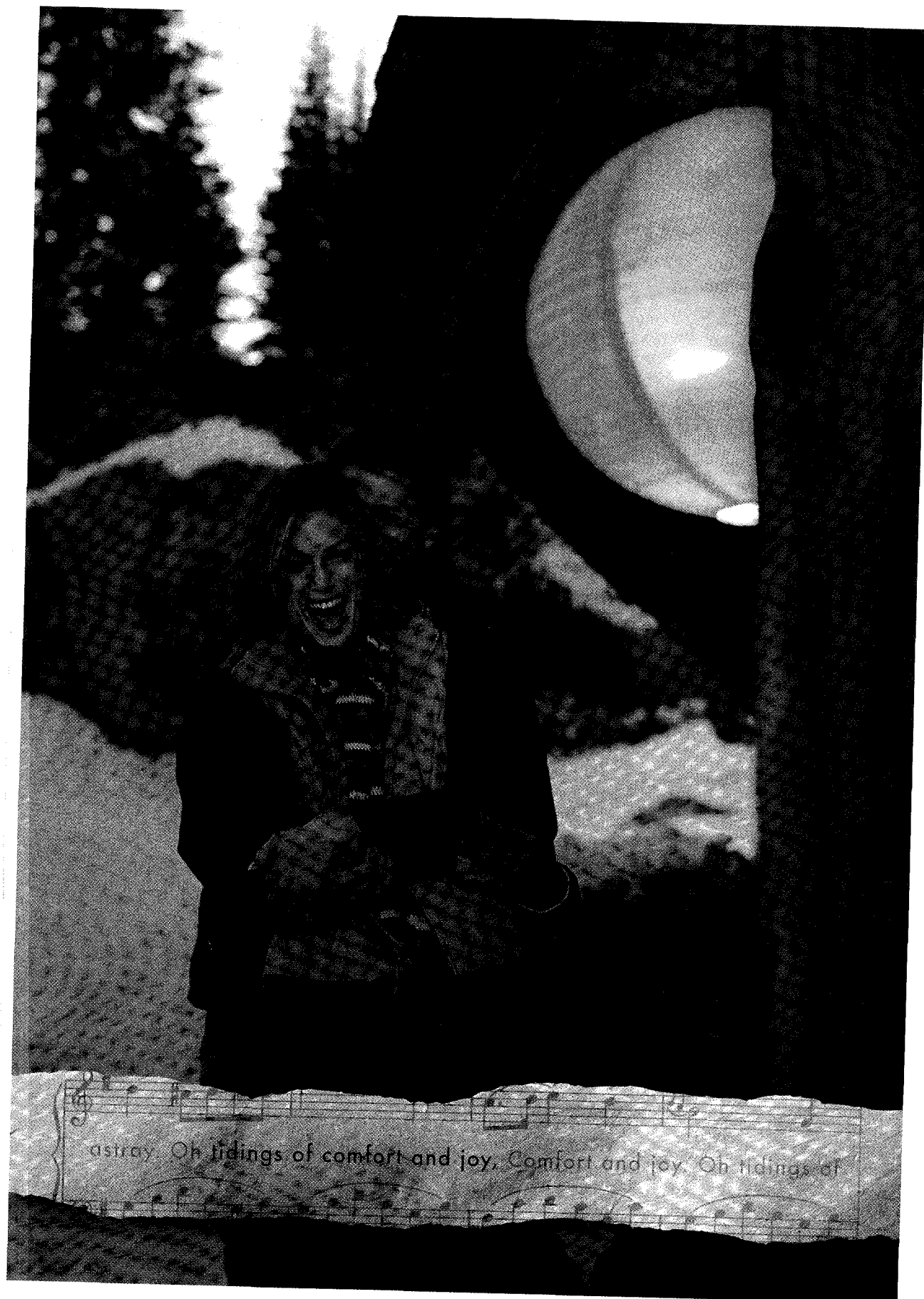
125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—Nov. 30: The hard-rocking Donnas, once known for combining the street-gang uniformity of the Ramones with classic girl-group coquettish charm, are pushing toward maturity with their fifth record, "Gold Medal." They now go by their own names and

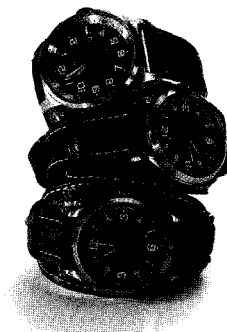
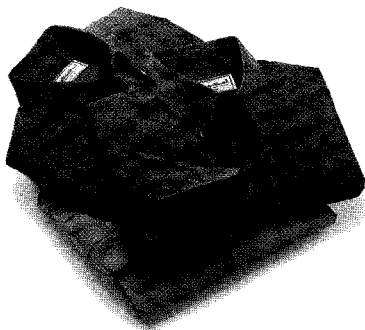
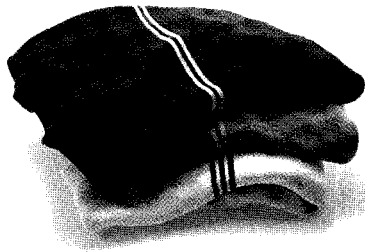
GLEN BAXTER





soon would be. The three of us were nestled all snug
in their beds, while visions of sugarplums danced in
their heads, and I lay down in my bed, to see what I
could see.





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keep company with folks like the pop producer Butch Walker. With the **Datsuns**, hirsute rockers from New Zealand.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL

59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Through Dec. 30: It isn't difficult to imagine the elegant chanteuse **Andrea Marcovicci** as one of Fred Astaire's partners swirling through an R.K.O. musical of the thirties. Marcovicci has no doubt imagined the very same thing, and her new program features the great screen (and stage) songs written for the Master. It is sure to combine the focus of a cultural historian with the passion of a true fan.

BIRDLAND

315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—Fred Astaire's no-nonsense singing was always subordinate to his glorious dancing, but illustrious composers like Irving Berlin, Cole Porter, and George Gershwin adored his style. In their new show, "**Singing Astaire**," which gets a special preview Nov. 26-27,

the singers Eric Comstock, Hilary Kole, and Christopher Gines (the key players behind the show "Our Sinatra") will have their work cut out for them. The show runs through Dec. 4 and starts again on Dec. 11.

BLUE NOTE

131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Through Nov. 28: **Toots Thielemans**, jazz's foremost harmonica virtuoso, has a passion for Brazilian music—his 1987 collaboration with Elis Regina, "Aquarela do Brasil," is a classic. He's in good company with the guitarist **Oscar Castro-Neves**, the percussionist **Airto Moreira**, and the simpatico American pianist **Kenny Werner**.

CARLYLE HOTEL

Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wrap-around murals, and, through Dec. 31, **Bobby Short**.

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA

Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—Through Nov. 28: A celebration of **Coleman Hawkins**, with **George Coleman**, **Eric Alexander**, **Harold Mabern**, **Joe Farnsworth**, and others (see This Week).

HERE ALL WEEK

Big-name performers and limited engagements get most of the coverage, but the city has its share of musicians who quietly play regular gigs. Here is a selective guide.

SUNDAYS

The soundtrack in the meatpacking district usually adheres to hip-hop and dance pop, but on Sundays at Rhône the vibe is pure jazz. This buffed-up night club could get by on its food alone, but, with the dazzling trumpeter **Lew Soloff** at the helm of a shifting band, the music is also superb. The stars mysteriously align here: although the club is located in hipster central, the attendees actually come to listen, and the cavernous room somehow has superb acoustics. Soloff's hand-picked groups have included the drummers **Victor Lewis** and **Jeff (Tain) Watts**. (63 Gansevoort St. 212-367-8440.)

MONDAYS

The restaurant Le Madeleine is a warm, inviting haven in the heart of the theatre district. Perched in his center spot by the window, **Gene Bertoncini** has been playing equally comforting jazz on his classical guitar on Sunday and Monday nights here for more than a decade. His repertoire seamlessly mingles bossa nova, Coltrane tunes, standards, and a hint of classical music. It's as civilized a sound as you're likely to hear within earshot of "Movin' Out." (403 W. 43rd St. 212-246-2993.)

TUESDAYS

Kathleen Landis has put in her time at the Café Pierre: eighteen years, to be exact. But she's used it wisely. This sophisticated, erudite, and passionate singer and pianist includes a mini-history of the music she performs—a recent Gershwin program filled listeners in on each song's origin, and her spotlight on tango is just as elucidating and entertaining. The Pierre may not have youth culture in mind—the tony clientele tends to be nipped, tucked, and extremely, er, experienced—but Landis has a way of bringing the room to life. (2 E. 61st St. 212-940-8195; Landis is here Tuesdays through Saturdays.)

WEDNESDAYS

It used to be you could find Dixieland jazz as easily as a taxi in this city; these days, you have to visit **Cajun**, a kitschy Southern-food establishment. **Eddy Davis** has been wielding a spirited banjo here with his **Wild Reeds** and **Wicked Rhythms** band for five years on Wednesday nights. Davis, who also plays with **Woody Allen** uptown on Monday nights at

the Café Carlyle, may not have an accustomed trumpeter in his quintet, but a British pianist, a female bassist, and **Mark Hashim**, a gifted saxophonist with an encyclopedic knowledge of vintage tunes, help keep the music crisp and jovial. (129 Eighth Ave., at 16th St. 212-691-6174.)

THURSDAYS

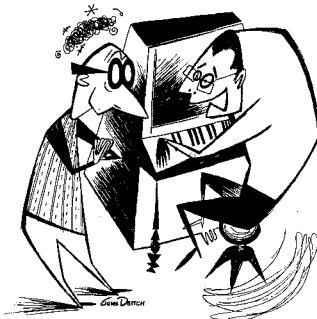
The **Mingus Big Band**, which filled Fez with the lush and rambunctious sounds of **Charles Mingus**'s innovative jazz for the past thirteen years, has moved uptown to the **Iridium** on Tuesday nights. Downtown, the **Mingus Orchestra** has taken over, and, as led by a rotating group of saxophonists that includes **Craig Handy** and **Vincent Herring**, it focusses on some of the departed bassist's more challenging works. The lean, sharp ten-piece features such uncommon jazz instrumentation as a bassoon and a French horn. But this isn't staid chamber jazz; when the spirit of the late great one hits them, they steam. (380 Lafayette St. 212-533-7000.)

FRIDAYS

Daryl Sherman can put across the Great American Songbook like a dream, but she must get a special thrill when she performs the songs of **Cole Porter**—she's playing on his piano at the **Waldorf Astoria**, where she presides over an early cocktail hour. On Saturday afternoons, the gracious stylist also holds a nonpatronizing children's tea party, where she sings gems like "Getting to Know You," along with some G-rated Porter for the adults. (301 Park Ave., between 49th and 50th Sts. 212-872-1275; Sherman is here Wednesdays through Saturdays.)

SATURDAYS

Cary Hoffman has been channelling **Frank Sinatra** for more than four years at the **Carnegie Club**, giving his all to such touchstones as "Night and Day" and "My Way." He has Ol' Blue Eyes' phrasing down pat, but Hoffman isn't a Sinatra imitator (for one thing, he has about as much physical resemblance to Sinatra as **Donald Rumsfeld** does). But Hoffman loves our greatest popular singer, and his lively renditions and brief biographical asides exhibit a level of respect that Sinatra would have both appreciated and expected. (156 W. 56th St. 212-957-9676.)



"What—this old rag?"

this holiday,
there will be a light.

"...a rousing gospel/rock/soul album."

Vanity Fair

"...moving spirituals that will appeal to all souls."

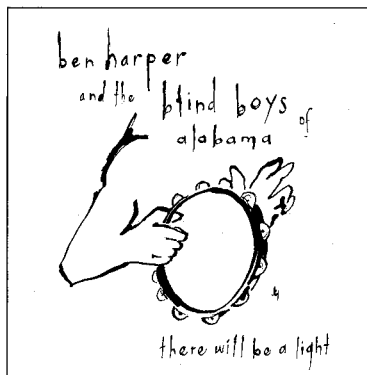
ELLE Magazine

"Harper takes his soul-stirring turn at the pulpit, doing the kind of white-hot testifying usually reserved for sweltering Sunday mornings."

Details

"An album of down South Sunday morning music that will make you see the light."

Vibe



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IRIDIUM

1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Nov. 24-28: Stan Getz had a celestial tone on the tenor saxophone, a relentless musical imagination, infallible taste, and a preternatural ease with bossa nova, the Brazilian genre that he was instrumental in introducing to the States during the early sixties. The pianist Bill Charlap, the tenor player Harry Allen, the vocalist Claudia Acuna, and the Brazilian ensemble Trio de Paz pay him tribute. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator Les Paul. The Mingus Big Band is now here on Tuesdays.

ART MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—When Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian II established a cabinet of wonders to display the riches of his court and the New World bounty brought back by his traders, he took as his motto *Quanta rariores tanta meliora* ("The rarer the better"). Thus, mingled in "Princely Splendor: The Dresden Court,



"Dress for the job you want, not the job you have." ("The Nutcracker," at Lincoln Center.)

JAZZ GALLERY

290 Hudson St., near Spring St. (212-242-1063)—The trumpeter Brian Lynch stocks his Spheres of Influence band with players who know Latin music as well as they know jazz. On Nov. 27, he beefs up the band to nine players to debut new work. Nov. 29: With "Steve Coleman Presents," the iconoclastic saxophonist continues his workshop series, giving fellow free thinkers space to experiment.

JAZZ STANDARD

116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Nov. 23-24: There's plenty of room for new jazz singers who don't hew to the stick-to-the-standards line. Kate McGarry, filling the early slot, and Rebecca Martin, in the late show, are promising vocalists who perform unfamiliar material.

SMOKE

2751 Broadway, between 105th and 106th Sts. (212-864-6662)—Nov. 26-27: The Steve Turre quintet. Whether making his trombone jump through hoops or extracting melodies from an arsenal of conch shells, Turre is a lusty improviser who's been a welcome presence on the bandstand since his days with Rahsaan Roland Kirk in the mid-seventies.

SWEET RHYTHM

88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (212-255-3626)—Nov. 25-27: The Victor Lewis Group. Watch out! The accomplished drummer, composer, and bandleader Lewis can summon up hard-bop hurricanes, and his front-line hornmen, the trumpeter Terrell Stafford and the saxophonist Seamus Blake, are equally powerful.

VILLAGE VANGUARD

178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Through Nov. 28: The alto saxophonist Lou Donaldson is a dazzling veteran bop player ever ready to tangle with his marvellous organist, Dr. Lonnie Smith. The Vanguard Jazz Orchestra holds sway on Mondays.

1580-1620" are a unicorn's horn (courtesy of a detusked narwhal), ostrich eggs, rock-crystal goblets, turned ivories, and lavishly embellished arms and armor. Perhaps most wondrous is the portable desk belonging to Elector Johann Georg I of Saxony, which carries in its secret drawers some two hundred and fifty items, including writing implements, toiletries, and tools for gardening and falconry. Through Jan. 30. ♦ Coincident with the Whitney's retrospective, the Met showcases a choice handful of works from its permanent collection in "Romare Bearden at the Met." Born in North Carolina and raised in Harlem, Bearden (1911-88) was an unlikely classicist, but his collages, prints, and paintings owe as much to the flat, hieratic spaces of Italian Renaissance masters as they do to jazz and the blues. The centerpiece here is the joyous and unsentimental six-panel collage "The Block," made in 1971, which presents a slice of a Harlem neighborhood as a vision of earth, heaven, and hell melded. Through March 6. ♦ A wealth of art and artifacts recovered from the tombs of ancient luminaries are on view in "China: Dawn of a Golden Age, 200-750 A.D." The exhibition begins in the waning days of the Han dynasty with items like gold filigree chimeras and a procession of bronze chariots, proceeds through the period when the Xianbei confederation of nomadic tribes came to power (hammered gold hat ornaments, an iron vessel in the shape of a crouching animal), continues on to the Wei and Sui dynasties (beatific Buddhas, painted screens, and carved stone panels from a sarcophagus), and ends with the early years of the Tang dynasty (nested reliquaries in carved stone and gold, guardian warriors made of gilt bronze). The Silk Road's influence is evident throughout, whether in the form of Roman glass objects that travelled to the region with traders, or in the Arabian- and European-style patterns that turn up in textile fragments. Through Jan. 23. ♦ "Gil-

bert Stuart," a show of works by the iconic painter of George Washington. Through Jan. 16. ♦ "William Kentridge." Works by the South African artist, dating from 1989 to 2001. Through Feb. 20. ♦ "The Colonial Andes: Tapestries and Silverwork, 1530-1830." Through Dec. 12. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—The museum has reopened in its renovated and enlarged home and is presenting a series of exhibits related to its metamorphosis. ♦ "Yoshio Taniguchi: Nine Museums" surveys other work by the architect who redesigned the museum. Through Jan. 31. ♦ "Michael Wesely: Open Shutter at the Museum of Modern Art." The German photographer turned his long-exposure method (he has left the shutter open for as long as three years) on MOMA while it was under construction. Through mid-2005. ♦ "Projects 82: Mark Dion—Rescue Archaeology." Dion excavated traces of the former Rockefeller town house from beneath the sculpture garden for this site-specific project. Through March 14. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Fridays, 10:30 to 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—"The Aztec Empire" lines the Guggenheim's spiral with more than four hundred artifacts, from carvings depicting harvest work to implements for human sacrifice. Through Feb. 13. ♦ The Guggenheim has the largest collection of work by Vasily Kandinsky in the United States, and its curators have decided to devote one gallery to his work permanently. "Kandinsky Gallery: An Inaugural Selection" kicks things off. ♦ "Keith Haring: New Wave Aztec." Through Feb. 6. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—Born in Los Angeles, raised in Japan, and inspired by expatriate Paris in the nineteen-twenties, Isamu Noguchi (1904-88) was an artist for the dawning global age. Viewers who have ventured to the Noguchi Museum in Queens will not find their assessment transformed by the current survey, "Isamu Noguchi: Master Sculptor." But it does look good. From the room of "puzzle" sculptures, biomorphic shapes in wood or stone fitted together without fasteners, to a stand of the famous "Akari" rice-paper lamps, from a terracotta portrait bust of the artist's Zen-monk uncle to another, all in chrome, of his friend Buckminster Fuller, the work is openhearted, technically pristine, masterful indeed. Through Jan. 16. ♦ "Bill Viola: Five Angels for the Millennium," a video installation made in 2001. Through March 6. ♦ "James Lee Byars: The Perfect Silence." Drawings, sculptures, and installations by the artist, who died in 1997. Through March 6. ♦ "Small: The Object in Film, Video, and Slide Installation." Through Feb. 6. ♦ Jennifer Pastor's "The Perfect Ride." Through Jan. 16. ♦ The city's museums are full of Romare Bearden's work right now, but "The Art of Romare Bearden" is the biggest, most thorough show. Through Jan. 9. ♦ Jacob Lawrence's "War Series." Through Jan. 31. ♦ "Memorials of War." Through Nov. 28. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—"Totems to Turquoise: Native North American Jewelry Arts of the Northwest and Southwest." Through July 10. ♦ "Frogs: A Chorus of Colors" presents some two hundred frogs in glass-walled habitats. Stars include the saucer-size African bullfrogs, who have been wrangling with the frog keepers for control of the togs that are used to feed them frozen mice, and the Chinese gliding frogs, whose toe webbing spreads wide enough to allow them to hang-glide. The exhibition's centerpiece is a large vivarium filled with seventy-five dart-poison frogs; cameras inside the glass walls can be swivelled, zoomed, and focussed with a pair of joysticks to get a closer look at the jewel-bright hoppers. There's a Webcam, too, for those who want to

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watch from home. Kids will be thrilled. Through Jan. 9. ♦ **"The Butterfly Conservatory: Tropical Butterflies Alive in Winter."** Through May 30. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART

200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—Childhood changed in the late nineteenth century, lengthening and becoming more peaceful as restrictive child-labor laws were passed. The images in **"Great Expectations: John Singer Sargent Painting Children"** are informed by this shift and by the artist's effort to search out each child's character rather than revert to cliché. In addition to the expected scenes of beaches and birthday parties, Sargent also painted portraits of rich society kids and the progeny of his artistic peers. The children's luminous beauty is made poignant by wall texts describing what became of them amid the next century's wars and upheaval. Through Jan. 16. ♦ **"Passing/Posing: Kehinde Wiley Paintings."** Through Feb. 6. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

ASIA SOCIETY

Park Ave. at 70th St. (212-517-2742)—**"In the Realm of Gods and Kings: Arts of India"** presents more than two thousand years' worth of paintings, sculptures, objects, and photographs. The works are loosely divided into two groups, those that relate to court life—royal portraits, scenes of princes at war and at play, embroidered silks, and carved-stone decorative plaques—and those that relate to mythology. The exploits of the blue-bodied Krishna are predominant in the second grouping: a sixteenth-century carved ivory comb depicts him stealing butter, for instance, and a seventeenth-century manuscript page shows him romancing Radha, his favorite consort. Through Jan. 2. ♦ **"Asian Games: The Art of Contest."** Through Jan. 16. ♦ **"When Gold Blossoms: Indian Jewelry from the Collection of Susan L. Beningtonson."** Through Jan. 23. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 9.)

COOPER-HEWITT NATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 91st St. (212-849-8300)—Legendary as a teacher at the Bauhaus and later at Black Mountain College and Yale, Josef Albers preached an aesthetic credo of simple, precise geometries and harmonious color relationships. His wife, Anni, often considered the preeminent textile artist of the twentieth century, was Albers's co-visionary and teaching partner for some fifty years. Combining furniture, glass, metalwork, and a fantastic series of album covers designed by Josef with tapestries and upholstery by Anni, **"Josef and Anni Albers: Designs for Living"** presents a primer on the couple's intertwined careers, and thereby a short course in high modernism. Through Feb. 27. ♦ It would be a fun exercise to walk through **"Design ≠ Art: Functional Objects from Donald Judd to Rachel Whiteread"** and see which works you could match to their creators without consulting the wall texts. The answers are often obvious: Judd's practical objects look much like his straight artistic ones, but with the planes adjusted to more useful heights; Dan Flavin's place settings are edged in fluorescent-bright colors that reflect onto the dishes below them; Robert Rauschenberg's tire lamp has the filthy elegance of one of his mid-century combines. Additional furnishings come from Scott Burton, Joel Shapiro, Sol LeWitt, Richard Tuttle, and John Chamberlain, among others. Comfort is not always the point: the room that was once Mrs. Carnegie's bedroom has been refurnished with shinning minimalist pieces, and Tom Sachs's "Bitch Lounge," in white tufted leather, was designed as an uneasy chair. Through Feb. 27, 2005. ♦ **"Faster, Cheaper, Newer, More: Revolutions of 1848."** Through Jan. 9. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 9; Saturdays, 10 to 6; and Sundays, noon to 6.)

DAHESH MUSEUM OF ART

580 Madison Ave., at 57th St. (212-759-0606)—The latest chapter in the Dahesh's history of nineteenth-century academic art is **"Facing the Other: Charles Cordier, Ethnographic Sculptor."** Cordier (1827-1905), a favorite of Napoleon III and Baron James de Rothschild, attempted a sculptural cat-

alogue of every race considered "exotic" by the French, which included their Italian neighbors as well as Greeks, Arabs, and Chinese. A heavy-lidded "African Venus" bought by Queen Victoria in 1851 is on loan from the current English monarch. The sculpture of Saïd Abdallah, a former Nubian slave turned art model, was first exhibited in 1848, the year slavery was abolished in France. Through Jan. 9. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6.)

FRICK COLLECTION

1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—The privately collected statuettes in **"European Bronzes from the Quentin Collection"** are on public display for the first time. Small in stature yet rich in detail, many of the cast-bronze figures still bear traces of the reddish-brown lacquer that made them glow in their collector's cabinets. Through Jan. 2. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

drawings Dicker-Brandeis hid in her suitcases, discovered after she was killed, in 1944. Reflecting intensive original research, **"Innovator, Activist, Healer: The Art of Friedl Dicker-Brandeis"** is crushingly sad, of course. But you walk out with colors singing in your head. Through Jan. 16. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45; Thursdays, 11 to 8; and Fridays, 11 to 3.)

NEUE GALERIE

1048 Fifth Ave., at 86th St. (212-628-6200)—**"Comic Grotesque: Wit and Mockery in German Art, 1870-1940."** Through Feb. 14. (Open Fridays, 11 to 9, and Saturdays through Mondays, 11 to 6.)

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER

22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—**"This is not debris,"** warns a trompe-l'oeil handwritten note in one of Manny Farber's busy tabletop still-lives. "Each of the items means something." Indeed, the candy bars, flowers, eggs, vegetables, toys, tools, postcards of fa-



"No, I'll be Gilbert—you be George." (Gilbert & George's "Perverse Pictures," at the Lehmann Maupin and Sonnabend galleries in Chelsea.)

JEWISH MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—Amid the terrors and deprivations of the Terezin concentration camp, children were given lessons in art, where they were taught to draw with bold, expressive shapes and synesthetic color choices. The teacher was their fellow-prisoner Friedl Dicker-Brandeis: a student of Johannes Itten and Paul Klee at the Bauhaus, then a designer and painter in Vienna and Berlin, she produced textiles, furniture, costumes, and stage sets, as well as tender, incisive portraits of her intimates. Examples of all are on view, as are some of the five thousand children's

mouse paintings, and so forth that crowd Farber's bird's-eye-view arrangements are rendered with the intensity of purpose of items in a rebus. A film critic and an academic, Farber has been quietly but seriously painting on the side for forty years. The work in **"Manny Farber: About Face"** ranges from abstractions on shaped and collaged papers from the nineteen-seventies through increasingly gestural still-lives of recent years. Through Jan. 16. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6.)

RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART

150 W. 17th St. (212-620-5000)—This newly opened museum is Manhattan's first devoted en-

VICTORIA ROBERTS

tirely to Himalayan art. (Open Tuesdays and Saturdays, 11 to 7; Wednesdays and Sundays, 11 to 5; and Thursdays and Fridays, 11 to 9.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM

144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—A show of Kerry James Marshall's recent work, "One True Thing: Meditations on Black Aesthetics" augments the artist's signature canvases (which recast nineteenth-century-style history paintings with African-American figures) with sculptures, drawings, video, and installation work. "Grocery Circular" paintings substitute food specials with artists' names and auction prices, demonstrating how all worth is market related. A series of light-box sculptures bear long, convoluted names of African-American churches. The laminated medallions in "First" commemorate landmarks in African-American history, like the first birth in the U.S., the first *Vogue* cover, and the first Nobel Prize in Literature. It's a fine history lesson, but few of the objects reach the heights of Marshall's excoriating history paintings. Through Jan. 9. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

KATHY BUTTERLY

Butterly, a forty-one-year-old ceramist who works in a familiar mode of sculpturally distorted vessel forms—evoking George Ohr and the contemporary likes of Ken Price and Adrian Saxe—is a surprise star of the current Carnegie International. You can see why from the tiny objects in this delightful show. She blends daintiness and funk in crumpled, pulsing shapes of porcelain and earthenware, with off-pretty glazes (lavenders, celadons), impudent patterns (whorls, splashes), and mildly alarming textures (coral, bubblegum). Her work's signal quality—call it spectacular intimacy—epitomizes much recent ceramic art, whose invidious "craft" associations unjustly limit its exposure in the art world. Through Nov. 27. (De Nagy, 724 Fifth Ave. 212-262-5050.)

ALFRED LESLIE

Leslie's visual and filmic work serves as a touchstone for New York's nineteen-fifties art scene. Dripped and splattered paintings like "Nix on Nixon" are exuberant examples of Abstract Expressionism, while stapled-together collages parallel Johns and Rauschenberg. A book of his prints paired with Kenneth Koch's poems invokes the literary wing of the New York School. Every day at 2, the gallery will screen "The Last Clean Shirt," "The Cedar Bar," and Leslie's best-known film, "Pull My Daisy" (1959), which was co-directed with Robert Frank, stars Larry Rivers, Allen Ginsberg, and Gregory Corso, and includes a Beat narration by Jack Kerouac that touches on everything from poetry to painting, Buddhism to baseball. Through Dec. 22. (Stone, 113 E. 90th St. 212-987-4997.)

RICHARD PETTIBONE

Pettibone has made a career of reproducing other artists' work, earning him a place as a pioneer of appropriation. Here, forty years of Pettibones read at first like precious reproductions from an art-history text, or high-end postcards from an exhibition. Miniature Warhol soup cans, Lichtenstein heads, and even Ingres's "Bather of Valpinçon" are showcased in perfect little wooden frames. Brancusi's "Column of Infinity," a ninety-six-foot steel-spine column in Romania, has been scaled down to gallery size, and Picasso etchings from the spicy, erotic "347" series are translated onto bright-red grounds. The subtle alterations to these familiar images refresh jaded eyes. Through Dec. 23. (Castelli, 18 E. 77th St. 212-249-4470.)

PAUL PFEIFFER

The uptown installment of Pfeiffer's two-gallery show (see Gagosian in Chelsea) plays to his strengths. "Caryatid," a silent video of soccer players hitting the turf hard enough to be injured, builds on ear-

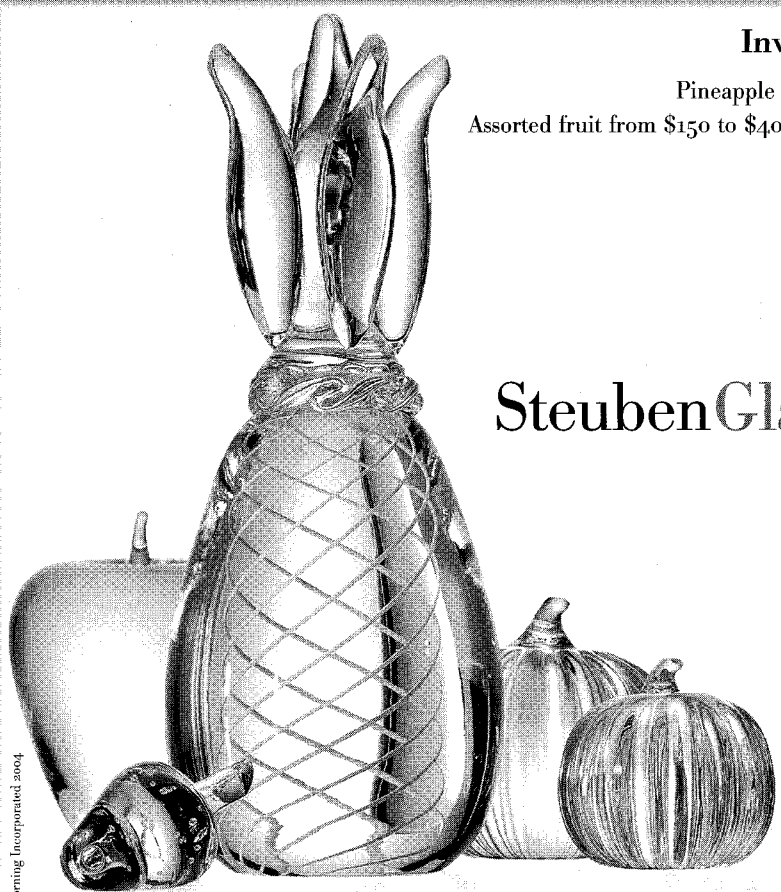


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lier musings regarding the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat. "Empire" tracks a community of wasps over three months as they build a new nest. "Live Evil" is a corner projection of a doubled, headless, dancing Michael Jackson. And "Sunset Flash" is a postcard-size projected loop of a family reunion in which the sun perpetually sets. Through Dec. 18. (The Project, 37 W. 57th St. 212-688-4673.)

Short List

IAN HAMILTON FINLAY

UBS Gallery, 1285 Sixth Ave. 212-713-2885. Through Dec. 3.

ADOLPH GOTTLIEB

Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 212-421-3292. Through Dec. 31.

BRIAN HUNT

Mitchell-Innes & Nash, 1018 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 212-744-7400. Through Dec. 11.

JOAN SNYDER

Alexandre, 41 E. 57th St. 212-755-2828. Through Dec. 23.

sculptures are less scatological than the paintings, but they retain a latent nastiness. Through Dec. 11. (Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. 212-206-9300.)

GILBERT & GEORGE

Two galleries will be showing "Perverse Pictures," mixed-media images by the British duo known for their willfully controversial work. Through Dec. 18. (Lehmann Maupin, 540 W. 26th St. 212-255-2923; Sonnabend, 536 W. 22nd St. 212-627-1018.)

GIORGIO MORANDI

The same boxes and narrow-necked bottles, arranged in pulsating rows of gray and beige, appear in each of these eight small paintings and drawings, dating from 1950 to 1964. All titled "Natura Morta," they make up the first substantial local showing of the artist's work in many years, and the experience is something like looking back at photographs of one's grandparents as young people—they're firmly of their time, yet surprisingly fresh and stylish, as if the passing of years could never touch their poised vitality. Culled mostly from European sources and private collections, they won't likely be accessible again anytime soon. Through Dec. 4. (Schoormans, 508 W. 26th St. 212-243-3159.)



An eclectic group of musicians gather to perform "Lost Objects" at BAM (see Classical).

GALLERIES-CHELSEA

DAWN CLEMENTS

The gallery is encircled by a forty-six-foot-long ink-on-paper drawing of scenes from the noirish "Sudden Fear" (1952), in which Joan Crawford plays a woman whose husband wants to kill her. For Clements, it's the atmosphere of glamorous suffocation that attracts; her unpeopled, half-life-size images reproduce in loving detail the swank town houses, messy kitchens, and lonely train compartments where women's-picture melodrama unfolds. Through Dec. 23. (Feigen Contemporary, 535 W. 20th St. 212-929-0500.)

GENE DAVIS

A gathering of stripe paintings from the nineteen-sixties celebrates an underrated member of the so-called Washington Color school (which also included Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland), who died in 1985. Eschewing the heraldic pictorial unity that was favored by the group's mentor, Clement Greenberg, Davis deployed thick or thin, uniform vertical stripes as themes on which to ring jazzy variations. In a simple instance, marching blue and green give way, at one edge, to flabbergasting pink. More complex, multicolored pictures meddle with symmetry to foment hopping, reversible, and otherwise raggy rhythms. Infallibly elegant, the paintings suggest a dignified personage who, perhaps on a dare, uncorks a first-rate buck-and-wing. Through Dec. 4. (Cowles, 537 W. 24th St. 212-741-8999.)

CARROLL DUNHAM

In Dunham's new group of paintings, collectively titled "He, She, and It," one bulbous protuberance appears much like another, and all seem to want to lock into each other's negative space. Only jagged black lines keep them apart. The same kidney and breast shapes appear in a series of sculptures executed in cut and folded black sheet metal, presented on large wooden tables. Trembling and tensile, the

PAUL PFEIFFER

Pfeiffer titles his digital prints "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse," after Dürer's fifteenth-century woodcut. Each image here has been digitally altered to isolate a basketball player on a court, surrounded by lights and adoring fans. The conceit is the same as in the videos that put Pfeiffer on the map, in which the fighters were almost entirely deleted from footage of boxing matches, but these pieces lack the pathos and poetry of the earlier work. Better and less bombastic are works like "Burial at Sea," a video on a modestly sized monitor of a sunset turned topsy-turvy with a revolving camera, and "Vertical Corridor," an inch-deep installation that uses mirrors to create a long, sleekly modern version of the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles. Through Dec. 18. (Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 212-741-1111.)

MARK TANSEY

Sun glare on ice and ocean is Tansey's ostensible subject in a new group of blue-and-white paintings, each depicting an outdoorsy feat like the crossing of a glacial crevasse or a rappelled descent down a rock face. Speaking of faces, take a closer look at that snowball. Those contours aren't just swirls of mist, they're the visage of Karl Marx. Elsewhere, James Joyce's form floats in the wake of a speedboat; an alternative Rushmore conceals portraits of Socrates, Wittgenstein, and other indoor athletes of the mind. Tansey's Photo-Realist surrealism can grow monotonous, but if the monochrome is any indication, he intends that sameness as a joke too. Through Dec. 18. (Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 212-741-1111.)

"MINIMAL ARTISTS TRY TO MAKE SOMETHING LOOK LIKE NOTHING AND CONCEPTUAL ARTISTS TRY TO MAKE NOTHING LOOK LIKE SOMETHING, OR IS IT THE OTHER WAY AROUND?"

In Paris on the Left Bank in the sixties, Galerie Yvon Lambert was the place to see vanguard art; that heyday is relived in a facetiously titled mini-

art-history lesson put together by the artist-curator Jonathan Monk. It's full of heavyweights: Andre, Barry, Broun, Kawara, Lawler, LeWitt, Mangold, Marden, Oppenheim, Sandback, Toroni, Tuttle, Weiner. Best is a wistful, playful Joan Jonas performance (filmed by Peter Campus) in which bundled dancers struggle together against the wind. Through Dec. 18. (Lambert, 564 W. 25th St. 212-242-3611.)

Short List

LOUISE BOURGEOIS

Cheim & Read, 547 W. 25th St. 212-242-7727. Through Dec. 31.

BURTON SILVERMAN

Henoch, 555 W. 25th St. 917-305-0003. Through Dec. 4.

JOAN SNYDER

Cunningham, 541 W. 25th St. 212-242-2772. Through Dec. 4.

GALLERIES-QUEENS

"AN AMERICAN ODYSSEY: 1945-1980"

The curator Stephen Foster's survey doesn't neglect the usual suspects, but it's also cheerfully willing to surprise. Giorgio Cavallon, a Pollock favorite, is shown alongside Rothko, Gottlieb, Kline, Guston, and a de Kooning from the mid-seventies done on newspaper. Pop is represented by Ray Johnson as well as Warhol and Larry Rivers's quirky "Dutchmasters and Cigars III" (1964). American painters' engagement with photography is addressed with works like John Salt's "Purple Impala" (1973) and a 1992 Richard Estes view of City Hall. And he goes beyond the standard Krasner-Nevelson-Frankenthaler triumvirate to include women artists like Carole Feuerman, whose 1984 sculpture of a woman in a macramé bikini is like a sexy version of a Duane Hanson dummy. Through Jan. 13. (Queensborough Community College Art Gallery, 222-05 56th Ave., at Springfield Blvd. 718-631-6396.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

FRITZ HENLE

Before immigrating to the United States to escape Hitler, in 1936, Henle took the first of several trips to Mexico. Already known as a photojournalist, Henle quickly met and photographed Frida Kahlo (wrapped up in a rebozo), Diego Rivera (shown reclining against a monumental Olmec head in his garden), and a magnificent model known as Nieves (nude, eyes glinting behind a palm frond). The prints on view here also include images of potters in Puebla and silversmiths and musicians in Taxco, as well as fishermen, washerwomen, tortilla-makers, and burros at work. As for landscapes and architecture, there's a bell tolling high over Mexico City's Zócalo, and a storm over Taxco (steeple, lightning) as dramatic as anything by El Greco. Through Nov. 27. (Throckmorton, 145 E. 57th St. 212-233-1059.)

LOUISE LAWLER

Lawler goes behind the scenes at museums and art fairs, photographing art in various states of undress. A well-known Gerhard Richter painting, "Ema (Nude on a Staircase)," which echoes Duchamp's famous work, lies on its side in a MOMA gallery. In another photograph, Maurizio Cattelan's huge papier-mâché Picasso head, which he commissioned an actor to wear around MOMA in 1998, glares out from under plastic. Behind it hangs a Thomas Struth photograph of visitors wandering through the Metropolitan. This is true insider's art, and a return to form for Lawler. Through Dec. 23. (Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 212-206-7100.)

ABELARDO MORELL

Morell revitalized the camera obscura, making layered pictures by blocking all sources of light save for a pricked hole in a window that allows

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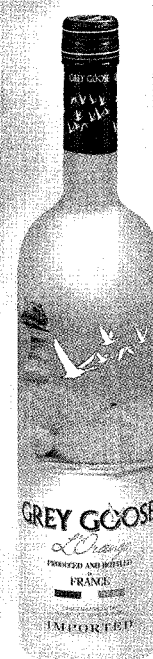
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It's the holiday season again, which means that it's the boxed-set season. Rockists get the Nirvana collection "With the Lights Out" (Geffen), packed with demos and rarities; jazz aficionados get "Seven Steps," a complete account of Miles Davis's 1963-1964 output (Columbia); reggae fans get the four-disk "This Is Reggae Music" (Trojan); and lovers of comedy and/or profanity get "Let the Buyer Beware," six CDs of vintage Lenny Bruce (Shout! Factory). Also out this season: sets devoted to Michael Jackson, the Broadway musical, and the sounds of New Orleans, along with the first boxed set of the digital era—U2's jet-black, limited-edition iPod, which entitles buyers to a deep discount on downloading the band's entire catalogue.

the outside in, albeit upside down and not to scale. In this show, Morell shows two paintings, by Edward Hopper and Roy Lichtenstein, fighting for attention in a Whitney gallery with the buildings directly across the street. The work he did in Cuba, where he was born in 1948, in which baroque bell towers and the expansive Art Deco Havana skyline are superimposed onto cracked apartment walls, plastic flowers, and rickety spiral stairways, seems to collapse time. And astoundingly complex silver-gelatin prints of the inner workings of clocks, motion studies of falling pitchers and a hammer beating lead, and a contraption of laboratory tubes and beakers show an exciting new direction. Through Dec. 4. (Benrubi, 41 E. 57th St. 212-888-6007.)

"PICTURING THE SOUTH"

These images of the American South by four photographers—William Christenberry, William Eggleston, Walker Evans, and Alec Soth—seem to borrow each other's details. Evans's silver-gelatin prints from the thirties, of sharecroppers' shacks, ruined mansions, barbershops, and war memorials, are remarkable for the clarity of their surfaces. Christenberry offers smaller color views of faded signs; a series of sixteen photos taken between 1964 and 1991 of the same storefront in Greensboro, Alabama, subtly documents a sad decline. Eggleston is represented by a portfolio of his revolutionary, vibrantly colored dye-transfer prints from the seventies, and Soth's extra-large color prints from 2002 include atmospheric landscapes (swamp with sodden mattress) and an old New Orleans blonde dressed up for Easter. Through Dec. 4. (Pace/MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 212-759-7999.)

"STAGING HAPPINESS"

This craftily curated show begins with vintage photographs from the mid-thirties that represent the vestiges of the Russian avant-garde working in the medium—Georgy Petrusov's image of Vera Mukhina's famous "Monument to the Workers and Peasant Women," doubled in a reflecting pool; Alexander Rodchenko's stern soldiers under a "Workers of the World Unite!" banner. A staged image from Max Alpert's famous "Twenty-four Hours in the Life of the Filippov Family," of father, mother, and children, all smiles, enjoying a picnic in front of their late-model roadster, was meant to convince non-Communist eyes that life in the U.S.S.R. was simply grand. Later, postwar photographs are heavily retouched and hand-painted, in some cases to the point of complete fabrication, culminating in the unforgettable montage of Lenin and Stalin chatting on a park bench. Through Dec. 30. (Nailya Alexander, 24 W. 57th St. 212-315-2211.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY

In "Looking at Life," two hundred prints taken for that magazine between 1936 and 1992 provide both a survey of photojournalism and a capsule history of much of the twentieth century. John Steinbeck's "Grapes of Wrath" began as an assignment for *Life* in migrant-labor camps in 1939 with the photographer Horace Bristol. The exhibition is organized by theme: "War" includes Robert Capa's D Day pictures and Larry Burrows's harrowing shots from Vietnam. In "Personalities," a young Cassius Clay trains underwater in a photo-essay by Flip Schulke, and Marilyn Monroe is giddy in portraits by Alfred Eisenstadt. ♦ The digital snapshots in "Inconvenient Evidence: Iraqi Prison Photographs from Abu Ghraib" are small, unframed, and hung with strict simplicity in a small room downstairs. Some of the images first appeared in this magazine. Through Nov. 28. (1133 Sixth Ave. 212-857-0000.)

Short List

BILL BRANDT
Edwynn Houk, 745 Fifth Ave. 212-750-7070.
Through Jan. 8.

JOAN FONTCUBERTA
Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 212-752-1223.
Through Jan. 8.

MORTON NILSSON

ClampArt, 531 W. 25th St. 646-230-0020.
Through Dec. 18.

NANCY REXROTH

Mann, 210 Eleventh Ave. 212-989-7600.
Through Jan. 8.

RAGHUBIR SINGH

Sepia, 148 W. 24th St. 212-645-9444.
Through Dec. 30.

BURK UZZLE

Laurence Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 212-397-3930.
Through Dec. 24.

"3 ON THE SUBWAY"

Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave.
at 104th St. 212-534-1672. Through Jan. 17.

"WALKER EVANS AND HIS EARLY CIRCLE"

Greenberg, 41 E. 57th St. 212-334-0010.
Through Dec. 4.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES**SOTHEBY'S**

Nov. 30 at 10:15 A.M.: Sadly, you can't buy the sweeping views of Central Park at this sale of decorative items and furniture from Pierre Bergé's thirty-eighth-floor pied-à-terre at the Pierre Hotel. Bergé, the co-founder of the Yves Saint Laurent couture house, clearly saw New York as a sort of fantastic frontier outpost, and he filled his apartment with American objects and art works, including an American Renaissance rosewood cabinet decorated with Native American masks and portraits of Native American chiefs, and combined these with sumptuous, vibrantly upholstered furniture and such luxurious Orientalist touches as an Egyptian Revival lamp decorated with a griffin, parlor furniture adorned with gilt-bronze Egyptian heads, and portraits of Indian princes from the turn of the nineteenth century. Other highlights include two Tiffany-studio floor lamps with a geometric design, a large mantel clock depicting a seated figure of Benjamin Franklin, and a decorative early-nineteenth-century mahogany secrétaire. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S

Nov. 30 and Dec. 1 at 10 A.M. and 2: The "House Sale," a monthly auction of furniture, art works, and decorations offered at moderate prices. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

**CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA****METROPOLITAN OPERA**

Nov. 24 and Nov. 27 at 8: A great pair of ladies—Ruth Ann Swenson and Anna Netrebko—are Mimi and Musetta in "La Bohème," with Frank Lopardo and Peter Mattei (no slouches themselves) as Rodolfo and Marcello; Daniel Oren conducts. ♦ Nov. 26 and Nov. 30 at 7:30: Otto Schenk's production of "Tannhäuser" (staged by Stephen Pickover) returns to the house with some major star power—Deborah Voigt, Michelle DeYoung, Peter Seiffert, Thomas Hampson, and Kurt Moll; Mark Elder. ♦ Nov. 27 at 1:30: "Aida," featuring Norma Fantini (in the title role), Irina Mishura, Franco Farina, Ambrogio Maestri, and Kwangchul Youn; Marcello Viotti. ♦ Nov. 29 at 8: John Dexter's 1974 production of Verdi's "I Vespri Siciliani," with Nelly Miricioiu, Francisco Casanova, Leo Nucci, and Samuel Ramey; Frédéric Chaslin. (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

VENICE BAROQUE ORCHESTRA:**"ANDROMEDA LIBERATA"**

Andrea Marcon's sterling ensemble proved its mettle in last season's production of Handel's "Siroe" at BAM, which, with its intimate, stripped-down setting, was one of the most persuasive evenings of Baroque opera in some time. They come to Carnegie Hall to offer a concert performance of this "serenata," a dramatic parable that Vivaldi (and several other composers) wrote to honor the return of Car-

dinal Pietro Ottoboni, banished from "La Serenisima" for fourteen years, to Venice in July of 1726. The cast includes Simone Kermes, Katerina Bernova, and Max Emanuel Cencic, who sing the work in the group's new Archiv recording. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Nov. 29 at 7:30.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES**NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC**

Ligeti's "Concert Românesc" ("Romanian Concerto") is a work from the composer's Hungarian years of the nineteen-fifties, during which he had to devise ways to write interesting music under the deadening strictures of socialist realism. The amazingly vital result, well worth hearing, will receive its New York premiere with the Philharmonic and the St. Louis Symphony's music director, David Robertson, a young American conductor who (along with Alan Gilbert) will enjoy a close relationship to the orchestra in the coming seasons. The program also includes Prokofiev's "Classical" Symphony and Mendelssohn's "Italian" Symphony; Emanuel Ax is on hand for Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 2 in F Minor. (Nov. 24 and Nov. 30 at 7:30 and Nov. 26-27 at 8.) ♦ Robertson and the orchestra also perform in a Saturday-matinée concert, with the Prokofiev and Mendelssohn works preceded by a chamber performance (with the eminent pianist Jerome Lowenthal and the cellist Hai-Ye Ni joining the orchestra's concertmaster, Glenn Dicterow) of Tchaikovsky's Piano Trio in A Minor. (Nov. 27 at 2.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

"LOST OBJECTS"

The religious oratorio, a collaborative work between the Bang on a Can composers (Julia Wolfe, Michael Gordon, and David Lang) and the writer Deborah Artman, receives its American stage premiere at the Brooklyn Academy of Music from an unexpected coalition of performers: DJ Spooky, the crack Baroque ensemble Concerto Köln, the New York Virtuoso Singers, a trio of dancers, and the Lost Objects Ensemble, playing on rock instruments. François Girard ("Thirty-two Short Films About Glenn Gould") directs. (30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. Nov. 30 at 7 and Dec. 2-4 at 7:30.)

RECITALS**"MIDTOWN CONCERTS" SERIES:****GRENSER TRIO**

The clarinet-cello-fortepiano trio performs Beethoven's Trio in B-Flat Major, Op. 11, along with music by two other important figures from the classical period, Lefèvre and Gyrowetz (the "Grand Trio," Op. 43). (Church of St. Francis of Assisi, 135 W. 31st St. Nov. 24 at 1:15. No tickets required.)

BARGEMUSIC

Much of classical New York is shut down for the holiday, but Olga Bloom's floating chamber-music series soldiers on. Nov. 25-26 at 7:30: Reger's Suite No. 1 for Solo Viola, a moody little masterpiece of late Romanticism, leads off a program by the violinist and violist David Aaron Carpenter and the pianist Cullan Bryant that also includes a clutch of Shostakovich preludes and sonatas by Brahms and Franck. ♦ Nov. 27 at 7:30 and Nov. 28 at 4: The Vega Quartet performs Beethoven's String Quartet in A Minor, Op. 132, and Mozart's Clarinet Quintet (with Erhan Sloane). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

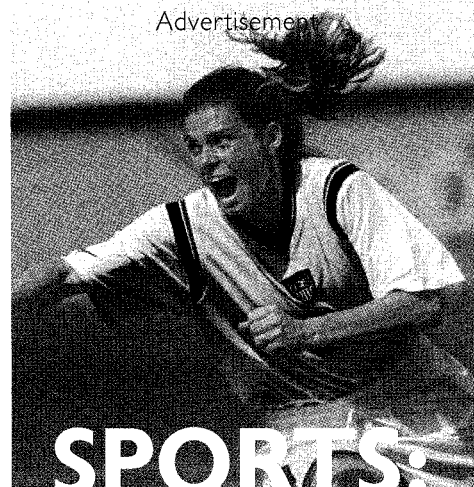
THE QUEEN'S CHAMBER TRIO

The harpsichordist Elaine Comparone, with the violinist Robert Zubrycki and the cellist Peter Seidenberg, performs three Mozart works usually heard on piano or fortepiano, including Mozart's Trios in G Major, K. 564, and in E Major, K. 542, and Beethoven's "Variations on Themes from Mozart Operas." (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Nov. 28 at 2.)

"MUSIC BEFORE 1800" SERIES:**THE FERRARA ENSEMBLE**

The early-music group—which, despite its name, hails from Basel, Switzerland—offers "Très Riches

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**BREAKING RECORDS,
BREAKING BARRIERS**

Sports: Breaking Records, Breaking Barriers, a new Smithsonian exhibition sponsored exclusively by Audi, celebrates and honors pioneering athletes who broke records for themselves and broke barriers for all, both on and off the playing field.

Spotlighting the Smithsonian's sports collection, the exhibition features dozens of artifacts, including Abraham Lincoln's handball, Althea Gibson's tennis racquet and Lance Armstrong's yellow race jersey from the Tour de France.

The *Sports* national tour launches October 7, 2004 and runs until January 9, 2005 at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C. before moving on to other cities. For tour information, go to www.sites.si.edu, and visit www.neverfollow.com for continual updates on the traveling exhibit.

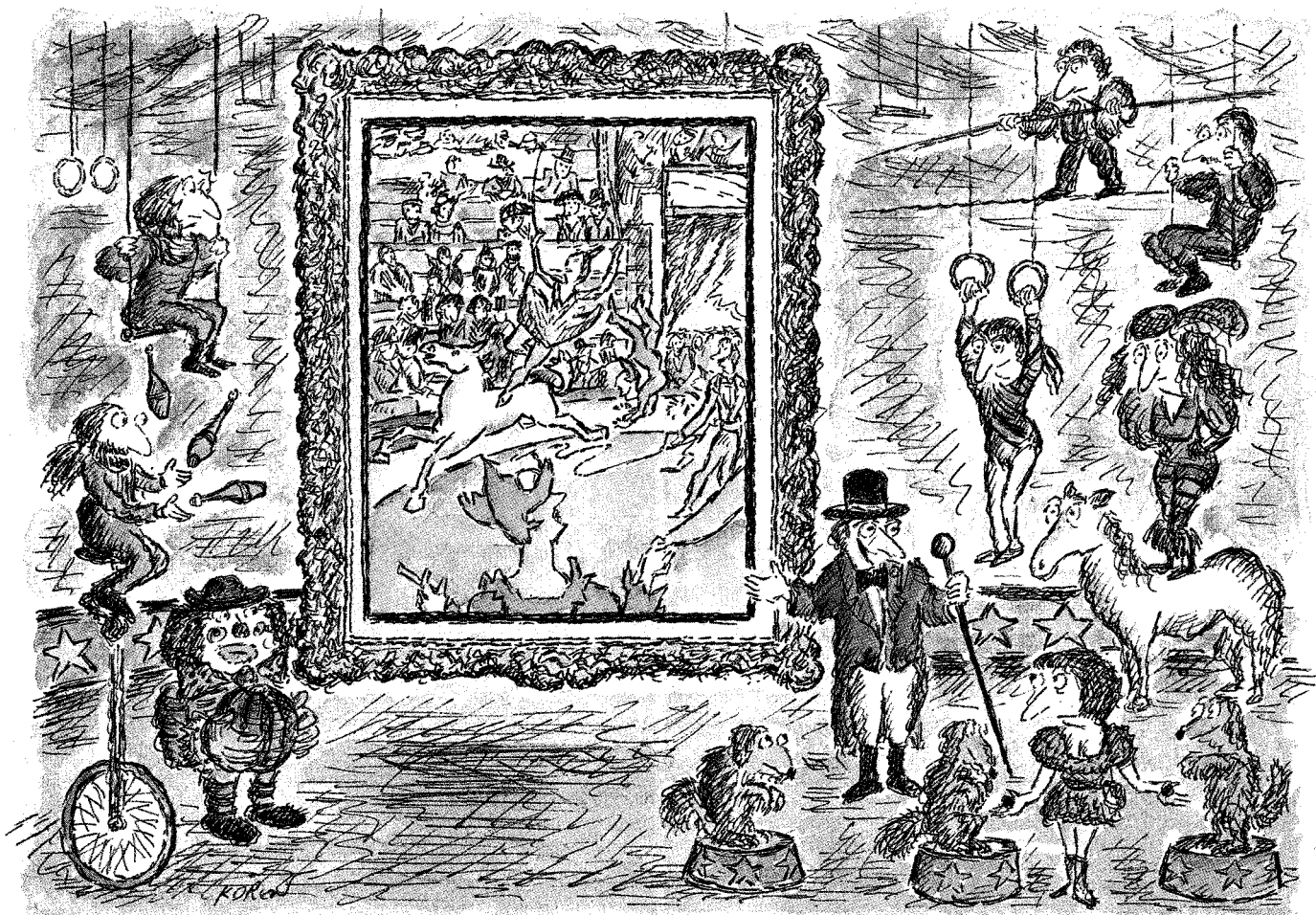


Smithsonian Institution



Sports: Breaking Records, Breaking Barriers was developed by the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, Behring Center, and the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES).

Audi is the exclusive national sponsor of the exhibition.



"Ladies and gentlemen, may I call your attention to the space-defying feats of Georges Seurat, and his portrayal of the symbiotic relationship between performer and spectator through the use of active and passive visual elements—most notably, the spatial and linear ambiguities that play across the canvas!" (The Big Apple Circus's current show, "Picturesque," which includes acts based on modern masterworks, is now playing.)

Heures: Gothic Music for the Valois Dukes," a program featuring courtly love songs by Machaut, Solage, Suzay, and others. (Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st St. 212-666-9266. Nov. 28 at 4.)

DANIIL SHTODA AND LARISSA GERGIEVA
Gergieva—Valery Gergiev's sister, the reigning opera coach at the Mariinsky Theatre—is the guiding light (and only accompanist) for Shtoda, a young Russian singer whose memorably sweet tenor can be heard on Claudio Abbado's recording of "Falstaff." Their program amounts to a history of the Russian "romance," featuring songs for voice and piano that range from the delicately Mediterranean musings of Glinka ("Venetian Night") to works by the late-twentieth-century composer Georgy Sviridov ("The Russian Girl"), by way of Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff, and Cui. (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800. Nov. 30 at 7:30.)

AUSTRIAN CULTURAL FORUM

The violinist Eugenyi Chevkenov and the pianist Maria Prinz offer two evenings of classic and modern music at the Forum's sleek little blond-wood concert hall. Nov. 30 at 8: Sonatas for violin and piano by Mozart, Schubert, and Beethoven ("Spring"), along with an early sonata by the conservative modernist Gottfried von Einem. ♦ Dec. 1 at 8: Music for violin and piano by the contemporary composer Rainer Bischof, along with the Beethoven, Schubert, and Mozart sonatas. (11 E. 52nd St. For free tickets, which are required, call 212-319-5300, ext. 222.)

ROULETTE: SYLVIE COURVOISIER

The daredevil composer-pianist presents the premiere of her "Étude-Caprices," followed by a set of improvisations. (Location One, 20 Greene St. 212-219-8242. Nov. 30 at 8:30.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

CHRISTMAS TREES

A tightrope walker, balancing his way between the balcony on Avery Fisher Hall and the one on the New York State Theatre, is one of the high-lights of the festivities at Lincoln Center's tree-lighting ceremony, set for Nov. 29, starting at 5:30. Dancers from "The Nutcracker," the baritone Thomas Hampson, and the Lincoln Center Holiday Brass band will also perform. (Fountain Plaza. For more information, call 212-581-3774.) ♦ Nov. 30, starting at 7: Jessica Simpson, Chris Isaak, Hilary Duff, the Rockettes, and others help throw the switch on the seven hundred lights adorning the seventy-one-foot-tall Norway spruce in Rockefeller Center. (Fifth Ave. at 50th St.) ♦ Dec. 2 at 6:30: The Reverend Timothy Wright, Keith (Wonderboy) Johnson, and other gospel singers will be on hand for the annual "Christmas in Harlem" tree-lighting ceremony on 125th Street. (Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., State Office Building, 163 W. 125th St.)

BIG APPLE CIRCUS

The troupe that calls the big city home but prefers to perform under a small tent returns for its twenty-seventh season with a program titled "Picturesque." Paying tribute to modern artists, the show includes acrobats, clowns, and trained animals, along with men in bowler hats (à la Magritte), colorful ballerinas (à la Degas), and one live Picasso—a juggling Spaniard who spells his name with a single "s" and who affixes a "Jr." to it. He may or may not be a supreme draftsman,

but the talent on display here involves keeping four Ping-Pong balls in the air using only his mouth. (Damrosch Park, Lincoln Center. 212-721-6500. Through Jan. 9.)

READINGS

Nov. 29 at 7:30: Darin Strauss, the author of the novel "Chang and Eng," and Maud Newton, the operator of a self-titled blog about the publishing world, read from their fiction. (Junno's, 64 Downing St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Nov. 30 at 7:30: Frank Bidart, Jorie Graham, Richard Howard, Kimiko Hahn, Katha Pollitt, and Helen Vendler read the entirety of Sylvia Plath's newly released "Ariel: The Restored Edition." Plath's daughter, Frieda Hughes, who wrote the foreword to the new edition, will provide the introductions. (Graduate Center, City University of New York, Fifth Ave. at 34th St. For more information, call 212-254-9628.)

TALKS

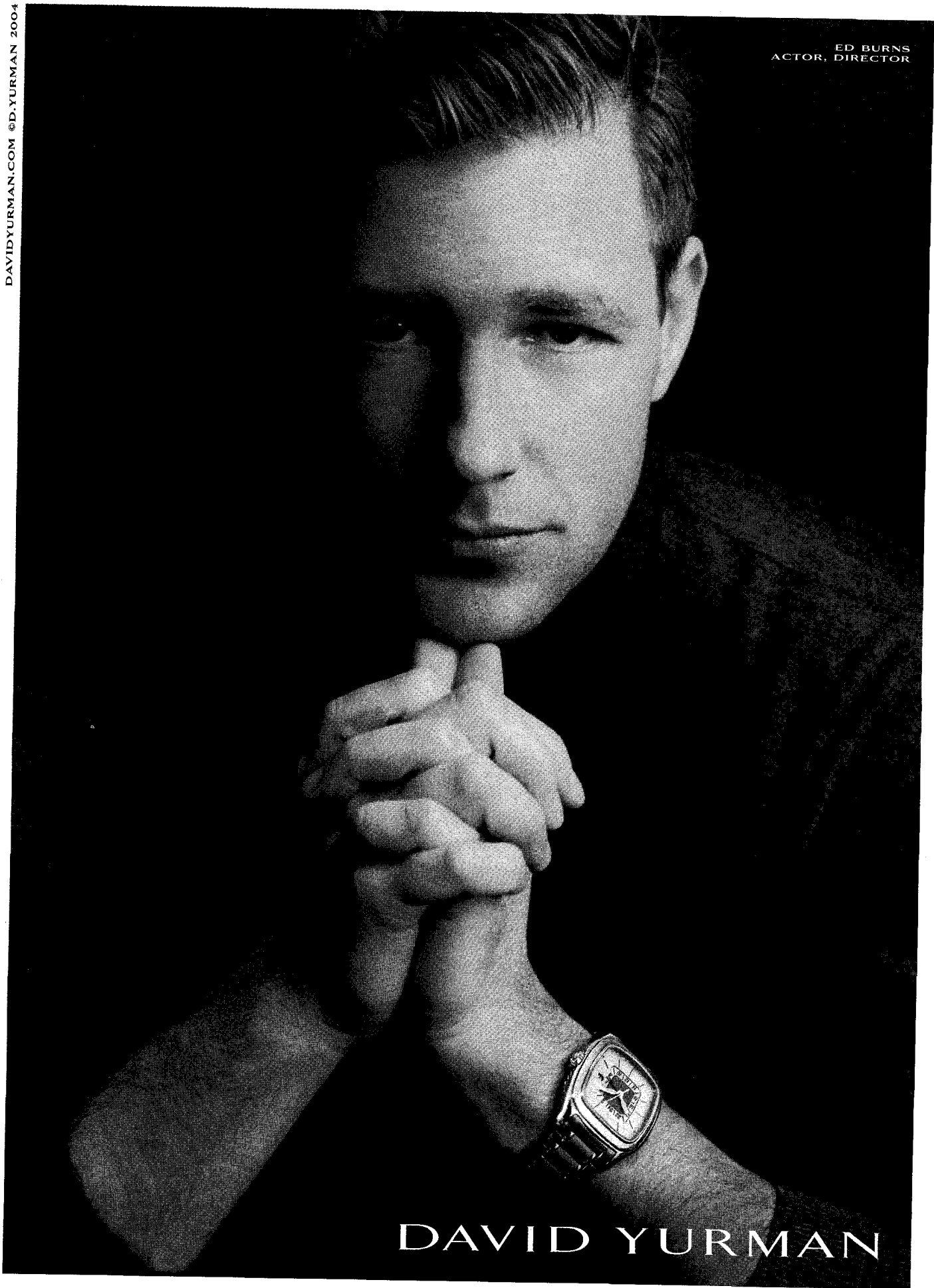
Nov. 29 at 6:30: Robert Mads Anderson, a climber who has reached the top of the tallest mountain on each of the seven continents, talks about his experience in Antarctica. (The Explorers Club, 46 E. 70th St. Tickets at the door.) ♦ Nov. 29 at 8: The critic Harold Bloom discusses his new book, "Where Shall Wisdom Be Found," with David Yezzi, the director of the 92nd Street Y's Unterberg Poetry Center. (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500.)

WALK

Nov. 27 at 9 A.M.: The nonprofit group Shorewalkers presents its annual post-Thanksgiving Walk Off the Turkey outing along the West Side of Manhattan, from South Ferry to the Little Red Lighthouse, beneath the George Washington Bridge. (For more information, call 212-330-7686.)

EDWARD KOREN

ED BURNS
ACTOR, DIRECTOR



DAVID YURMAN

NEW YORK BAL HARBOUR MANHASSET ATLANTA SOUTH COAST PLAZA

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MOVIES OPENING

ALEXANDER

Colin Farrell plays Alexander the Great, in a bio-pic directed by Oliver Stone. With Angelina Jolie, Val Kilmer, Anthony Hopkins, Jared Leto, and Rosario Dawson. Opening Nov. 24.

CHRISTMAS WITH THE KRANKS

An adaptation of John Grisham's novel about a family man (Tim Allen) who attempts to skip Christmas. With Jamie Lee Curtis and Julie Gonzalo. Directed by Joe Roth. Opening Nov. 24.

EASY

Jane Weinstock wrote and directed this romantic comedy, in which a young woman (Marguerite Moreau) juggles two suitors, an Irish comic and an Anglo-Indian poet. Opening Nov. 26.

A FOND KISS

A drama directed by Ken Loach, about a Pakistani d.j. in Glasgow who wants to marry a Catholic girl against the wishes of his Muslim parents. Opening Nov. 26. (Quad Cinema.)

GUERRILLA: THE TAKING OF PATTY HEARST Robert Stone's documentary about the Symbionese Liberation Army includes rare archival footage and an interview with its founder, Russ Little. Opening Nov. 26. (Angelika Film Center.)

NOTRE MUSIQUE

Jean-Luc Godard directed this three-part cinematic essay about war and global society. In French. Opening Nov. 24. (Film Forum.)

A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT

A drama set at the end of the First World War, in which a young French woman (Audrey Tautou) searches for her soldier fiancé. Directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet. In French. Opening Nov. 26. (Paris and Sunshine Cinema.)



the affair, in 1980. Ignacio (Gael García Bernal), now a young actor, brings a manuscript to Enrique (Fele Martínez), who has become a well-known movie director in Madrid. The manuscript chronicles the boys' friendship and what happened to Ignacio—he became a drag queen and a blackmailer. We see the story enacted; later, Enrique turns it into a movie, and we see that being filmed, too, at which point the priest, now an ex-priest, shows up, and we hear his version of the events. The truth of what happened to the grownup Ignacio and Enrique emerges in pieces: the three narratives, as they expand and correct one another, become a trio of mirrors producing endless off-angle reflections. The movie asks: Is love possible between men, or is it possible only between innocent boys? In Spanish.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 11/22/04.) (Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sunshine Cinema.)



"I'm sorry, dear—I'm just not feeling that noirish tonight." (The "Essential Noir" series, at Film Forum.)

FILM NOTES

BAD EDUCATION

In an obscure parochial school in rural Spain, two young boys, Ignacio and Enrique, fell in love. But the boys were only eleven, and the affair was broken up by a priest and schoolmaster named Manolo. The priest, however, wasn't simply enforcing the rules. Father Manolo had already laid hands on Ignacio, a sweet-faced choirboy, and he wanted him entirely for himself. Pedro Almodóvar's extraordinary new movie, which is both a summary of his career and a deepening of his recent style, opens sixteen years after

BEING JULIA

It's easy to forget about the talent of Annette Bening—she makes a movie and then disappears for a while to take care of the Beatty clan (four children, plus Warren). Those who seek out this film can revel once again in her actorly grace. It's a thirties period piece, in which Bening plays a limelight-loving actress who is having an affair with a selfish youth (Shaun Evans). Jeremy Irons shines in the role of her stage-manager husband, and the story, based on a Somerset Maugham novel, brims with sardonic humor.—*Bruce Diones* (Quad Cinema.)

BELLE DE JOUR

The antiheroine of Luis Buñuel's brilliant 1967 black comedy is a cool, upper-crust blonde named

Séverine (Catherine Deneuve), a survivor of child abuse and a frigid wife who moonlights as a prostitute. Buñuel was clear on his program: "Just between us," he wrote his co-writer, Jean-Claude Carrière, "a ridiculous theme, but intriguing. A multitude of whores with terrible conflicts between the superego and the id." The ambiguities in this film are purposeful, because Buñuel's art evokes, in an extreme way, the merging of the rational and the irrational in the everyday. Deneuve is magnificent in this role; her unusual combination of surface blankness and inner steel makes Séverine the kind of woman any man can fantasize about, from her "Boy Scout" doctor husband (Jean Sorel) to a gangster with gilded teeth (Pierre Clementi). As a well-bred wife, she wears Yves Saint Laurent suits that complete her; as a demimondaine, she wears her naked beauty proudly. In French.—*Michael Sragow* (Moving Image; Nov. 27-28.)

BIRTH

A disarmingly skillful exercise in high-style creepiness. Nicole Kidman, her hair cropped close, her body reduced to a mannequin skinniness, is Anna, a Fifth Avenue heiress whose husband, Sean, died of a heart attack in Central Park when Anna was twenty-five. Ten years later, just as Anna is about to marry a good-natured man (Danny Huston) who has patiently wooed her for years, a ten-year-old boy shows up and announces that he is Sean reborn. The boy (Cameron Bright) has a steady, unnerving gaze and a pointed chin—one of those demon-child glowering masks from the "Damien: Omen II" era of horror movies. But his self-assurance, as well as his knowledge of details of Sean and Anna's life together, amazes and captivates Anna. She's convinced that he's her dead husband in a new body. As Kidman sits naked in her bath, the boy takes off his clothes and climbs in with her—one of the most embarrassing scenes in the history of the movies. The British director Jonathan Glazer directs this rubbish with an assured elegance; he creates a magical winter fairy-tale atmosphere in New York, a looming sense of the uncanny. The movie is an appalling combination of distinguished talent and insane ideas.—*D.D.* (11/8/04) (Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 1, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, and Village East Cinemas.)

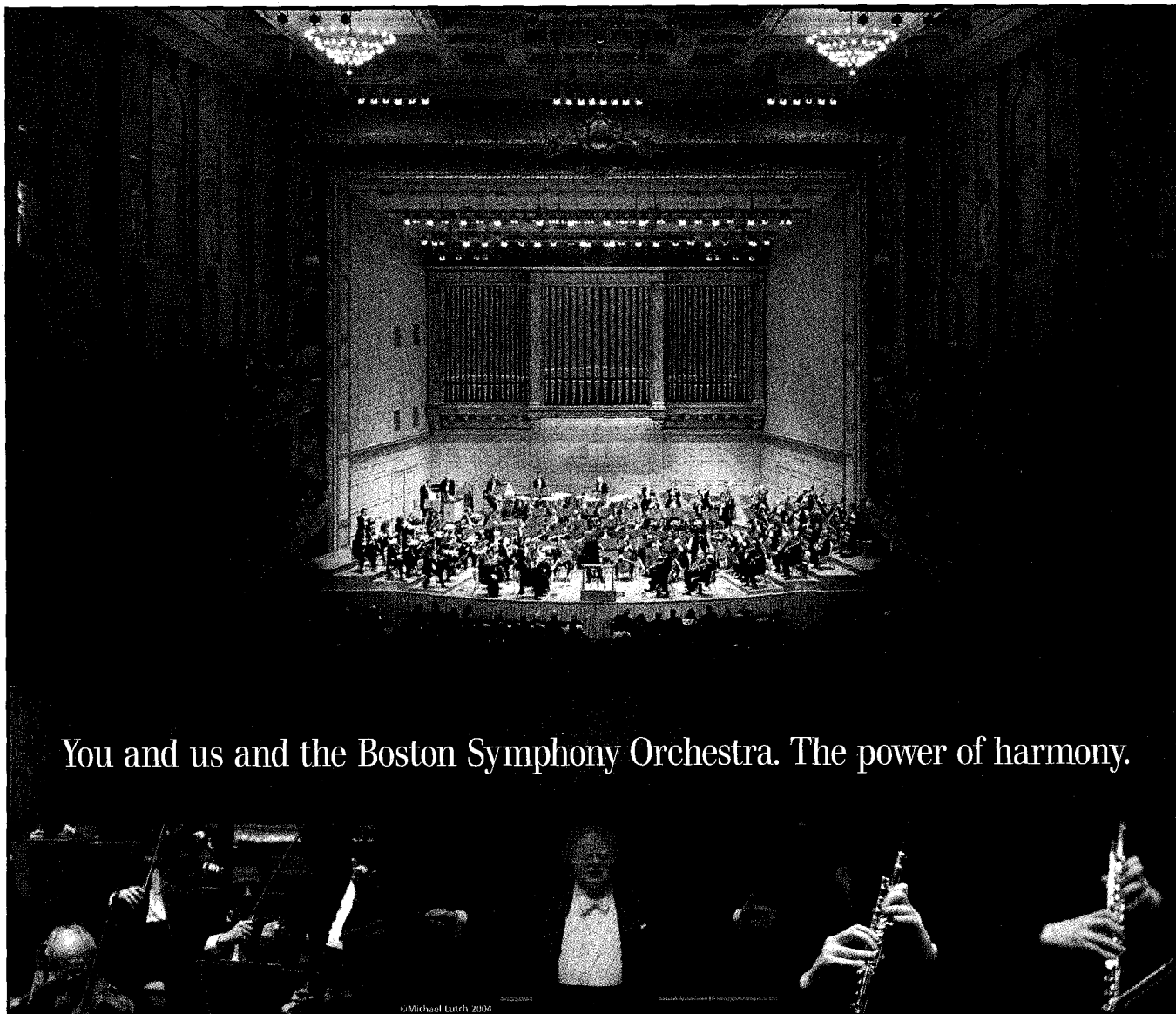
DOUBLE INDEMNITY

Every turn and twist is exactly calculated and achieves its effect with the simplest of means; this shrewd, smoothly tawdry thriller is one of the high points of forties films. The director, Billy Wilder, collaborated with Raymond Chandler in adapting James M. Cain's story (from his book "Three of a Kind"), and it's a tribute to them that one is likely to remember the names of the principal characters. Barbara Stanwyck's Phyllis Dietrichson—a platinum blonde who wears tight white sweaters, an anklet, and sleazy-kinky shoes—is perhaps the best acted and the most fixating of all the slutty, cold-blooded femmes fatales of the film-noir genre. With her bold stare, her sneering, over-lipsticked, thick-looking mouth, and her strategically displayed legs, she's a living entrapment device. Fred MacMurray's Walter Neff, an insurance salesman, is the patsy she ensnares in a plot to kill her businessman husband and collect on the double-indemnity clause in his policy; MacMurray's slightly opaque, regular-guy, macho Americanness is perfectly used here (he never had better audience empathy). And as Keyes, the claims investigator for the insurance company, Edward G. Robinson handles his sympathetic role with an easy mastery that gives the film some realistic underpinnings. It needs them, because despite the fine use of realistic sets—a cheerless middle-class home, a supermarket, offices—Chandler's dialogue is in his heightened laconic mode, and the narration is often so gaudy and terse that it seems an emblem of forties hardboiled attitudes.—*Pauline Kael* (Film Forum; Nov. 26-28.)

ENDURING LOVE

Ian McEwan's 1988 novel has been freely adapted by Joe Penhall, and the result is directed with customary grace by Roger Michell; whether their efforts were worthwhile, or well advised, is seriously open to question. Nobody can doubt the

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DVD NOTES: MARXIST THEORY

Groucho, Chico, Harpo, and even Zeppo together again on DVD.



"Damn it, Wilkinson, you know I can't fire you when you're doing your Groucho."

A Marx Brothers revival has long been overdue. There was a time when every undergraduate discovered these surreal anarchists anew at revival theatres or on television, but Monty Python and American late-night comedy left little oxygen for the Marxes' antiauthoritarian farce. Happily, the movies on the new **"Marx Brothers Silver Screen Collection"** (Universal)—the five features that the team made for devil-may-care Paramount before scoring their biggest hits at staid old M-G-M—have a knockout wit sure to level young initiates.

Disaffected students of any stripe will embrace the group's 1932 burlesque of university life, *"Horse Feathers"*: Groucho, as the president of Quincy College, learns the practical wisdom of his son Zeppo's statement that "a college needs something else besides education." The group's 1933 masterpiece, *"Duck Soup,"* takes on a larger institution than academia—statehood—as Groucho (here the President of the struggling nation of Freedonia) and Chico and Harpo (his secret agents) aim fusillades at every aspect of war with an abandon unmatched until Stanley Kubrick made *"Dr. Strangelove,"* forty years later. And even Kubrick backed off from ending his film with a custard-pie fight, whereas the Marx Brothers merrily sling slimy fruit around the set.

"The Cocoanuts" (1929) and *"Animal Crackers"* (1930) are stage hits committed to celluloid, and *"Monkey Business"* (1931), the Marx Brothers' first work written for the screen, uses equally theatrical techniques. But all retain their sass. The topics—sleazy Florida land speculation, art snobbery, and gangland rivalry, respectively—haven't lost their relevance, and the Marx Brothers and their writers (including George S. Kaufman, in the first two movies, and S. J. Perelman, in the third) revel in prickling wordplay that makes it clear why the group caused a sensation in the early sound era. The punning effrontery of Groucho and the dialect comedy of Chico came so fast and mock-furious that audiences had to attend the films several times in order to catch all the jokes. Each of the brothers (except the game, banal Zeppo) could also be a sight gag unto himself. And each had his comic force multiplied when he played off another Marx or two. Chico's piano-playing, for example, could

be a drag, but it was a drag that the group knew how to mine for laughs: in *"Animal Crackers,"* Groucho lets the audience know that he's had his fill of his brother's musicianship.

The "extras" on the sixth disk are pitifully puny: three interviews from *"The Today Show,"* including one with Harpo's son William (at least he shows some home movies). But the Library of America has just published the best possible unofficial extra, a volume called *"Kaufman & Co."* This anthology of George S. Kaufman's theatrical collaborations with the likes of Moss Hart and Ring Lardner contains the script to the original Broadway production of *"Animal Crackers,"* which includes a devastating lampoon of the era's favorite high-toned drama, Eugene O'Neill's *"Strange Interlude."* It's easy to laugh out loud at the sentences on the page, because they conjure up Groucho striking a ponderous pose as he says things like "The gods look down and laugh. This would be a better world for children if the parents had to eat the spinach." Despite Kaufman's frequent arguments with the Marxes, Groucho later said, "He was the wittiest man I ever knew, and perhaps some of that quality rubbed off on me."

Compleatists should take note of *"The Marx Brothers Collection"* (Warner Home Video), a set that offers pristine transfers of the Marxes' irresistible M-G-M hits, *"A Night at the Opera"* (1935) and *"A Day at the Races"* (1937). But these two milestones are yoked to three artistic flops: *"At the Circus"* (1939), *"Go West"* (1940), and *"The Big Store"* (1941), as well as RKO's adaptation of the stage hit *"Room Service"* (1938), which is barely a Marx Brothers film at all. (Warner will soon separate the droll from the dreck by releasing *"A Night at the Opera"* and *"A Day at the Races"* in a two-pack.) The brothers' film career wound down over the forties and ended with a whimper in 1950 with *"Love Happy,"* but Groucho rebounded as the host of the radio and TV game show *"You Bet Your Life."* Eighteen of the best episodes have been collected on the aptly named *"You Bet Your Life: The Best Episodes"* (Sony); there's also a set devoted to "lost" episodes that have not been seen since their original airing.

—Michael Sragow

perilous verve of the opening, in which Joe (Daniel Craig) and his girlfriend, Claire (Samantha Morton), witness a fatal balloon accident in an English field. From here on, though, the drama deflates, and we are left with the grinding, post-traumatic account of a relationship on the skids, set in a London that feels sickly with rain and spent light. Also on hand, like a bad angel, is Jed (Rhys Ifans), who was there as the balloon crashed and who subsequently makes it his mission to stalk the unfortunate Joe, apparently in the name of love. We are meant to ponder the various facets of passion, from the creepy to the domestic, as they glint throughout the film, yet one's overwhelming response is irritation—even at the climax, Joe seems either too stunned or too reflective to act as he should, and his stone-faced antiheroism is hard to take. Possibly the unfunniest movie of the year.—Anthony Lane (11/1/04) (Lincoln Square and Union Square.)

FINDING NEVERLAND

Marc Forster, the director who brought us *"Monster's Ball,"* has turned his attention—as one does—from Halle Berry to J. M. Barrie. The diminutive Scottish author is played by Johnny Depp, in a loose fantasia on the genesis of *"Peter Pan."* Barrie meets some young boys in a London park, and from his friendship with them and their widowed mother (Kate Winslet) he conjures a story of a child who cannot, or will not, grow up. The fact that the film takes liberties with the historical record (there were five brothers, for instance, not four) is a minor affair; more misguided is the reliance on whimsy, at moments where the real Barrie was straightforward, even chilly, in his imaginings. At other times, however, the movie's air of slightness and evanescence feels touching and right, and, if the result strikes you as too weepy for its own good, consider that the actual story of Barrie and his *"Lost Boys"*—some of whom met untimely deaths—was worse and more troubling by far. With Julie Christie, Dustin Hoffman, and, in the role of a real Peter, the clear and unsentimental Freddie Highmore.—A.L. (Cinema 1, East 86th Street Cinemas, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE GRUDGE

Here's a new one: the Japanese horror film *"Junon"* gets its tepid Hollywood makeover by its original director, Takashi Shimizu. The movie is your standard haunted-house boilerplate, with an American exchange student in Tokyo (Sarah Michelle Gellar) out to solve the mystery. There are rattling sounds, dark shadows, and the always reliable sightings of ghosts (in this case a zombified boy). As Gellar chases the nasty demons around, people keep entering the house and the body count rises. There's no plot to speak of, and no real terror, just a collection of nicely photographed scenes.—B.D. (Battery Park 11, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

I ♥ HUCKABEES

David O. Russell's new satire is an authentic disaster peppered with many odd and brilliant moments. The characters, skittering along the edges of the frame, speak only about Big Ideas, quarrel at the drop of a non sequitur, and have sex in uncomfortable places. The hero, one Albert Markovski (Jason Schwartzman), is the head of an open-spaces conservation group, and he makes a deal with a rising young executive (Jude Law) at Huckabees, a superstore chain, to preserve some woods. Yet Albert, a surly little hysteric, feels lost, so he hires two "existential detectives" (Dustin Hoffman and Lily Tomlin) to find out what's wrong with him. The true existentialist, however, is Catherine Vauban (Isabelle Huppert), a sexy *philosophe* in a limo who believes that life (as it says on her business card) is "cruelty, manipulation, meaninglessness." She and Albert make love on a log. There's much more, all of it devoted to a quarrel between two philosophical viewpoints—that everything is connected and that everything is separate. With Mark Wahlberg, who is touching and funny as a fireman with nothing on his mind but petroleum.—D.D. (10/4/04) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 11, Beekman,

CHARLES BARSOITI

Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE INCREDIBLES

A shiny new project from Pixar, sprinting in the footsteps of "Toy Story." Bob and Helen Parr are retired superheroes, raising their suspiciously gifted children in the suburbs. Bob, stuck in an office job, is lured back to the fray; being a lunk, he stumbles into a trap, and Helen, being a wife, has the guts and initiative to set out and rescue him. The movie, written and directed by Brad Bird, is a smart compound of shameless visual exaggeration (Bob's muscle tone alone is a special effect) and a touchingly unhip reliance on emotional realism. Instead of giggling references to other movies, we get snatches of ordinary family bickering, plus a distinct air of nineteen-fifties innocence—quite a fillip, given that many computer-animated movies pride themselves on technological progress and nothing else. The main voice-overs are delivered by Craig T. Nelson, Samuel L. Jackson, and—most winning of all—Holly Hunter.—A.L. (11/15/04) (Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

KINSEY

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sunshine Cinema.)

LOVE ME TONIGHT

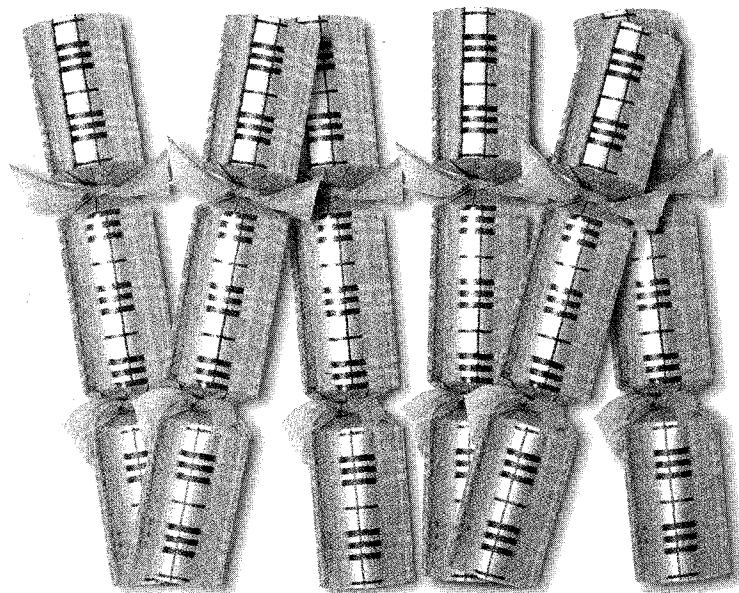
Cleverness squared equals brilliance in this scintillating 1932 musical comedy, starring Maurice Chevalier as an amorous tailor and Jeannette Macdonald as a princess who thinks he's a nobleman. This collaboration between the visual stylist Rouben Mamoulian and the songwriters Rodgers and Hart has a feathery dexterity. After Chevalier starts to sing "Isn't It Romantic" in his Paris shop, the number gets continued by others in a cab and on a troop train, on a march and in a Gypsy camp, until it's picked up by Macdonald on her balcony; it's a blissful expression of love as a feeling that can span a country and wed opposites. Chevalier is ebullient, Macdonald ardent and at ease with her own sensational figure. The cast includes the witty, gorgeous Myrna Loy as a man-hungry aristocrat and Hollywood's favorite upper-crust patriarch, C. Aubrey Smith, who in one of many strokes of comic ingenuity warbles a verse or two of "Mimi."—M.S. (Museum of Modern Art; Nov. 26.)

MILDRED PIERCE

Joan Crawford rises from poverty to affluence and then suffers glamorously in beach house, roadhouse, and mansion from the nasty semi-incestuous goings on of her cad husband (Zachary Scott) and her spoiled daughter (Ann Blyth). Miss Crawford's heavy breathing was certified as acting when she won an Academy Award for her performance here. Michael Curtiz directed this glossy adaptation of the James M. Cain novel. With Jack Carson and Eve Arden. Released in 1945.—P.K. (Film Forum; Nov. 26-28.)

THE MOTORCYCLE DIARIES

In 1952, a medical student called Ernesto Guevara de la Serna (Gael García Bernal) teamed up with his friend Alberto Granado (Rodrigo de la Serna), a biochemist, and journeyed eight thousand miles through South America. The tale of their travels is the basis for Walter Salles's ravishing, suggestive, and faintly superfluous film. Both young men are of middle-class Argentinean stock, and Ernesto has a girlfriend so rich and beautiful that her family's estate, as Alberto notes, looks like Switzerland. If he had stayed with her, Latin-American history might have taken a more placid turn; instead, Ernesto remounted his motorbike, headed into the Andes, and began the determined process of turning into Che Guevara. The film is sprinkled with gestures toward that future, especially when the two men work at a leper colony on the Amazon, but the foreshadowing doesn't always convince; the sequence in which they meet a pair of wandering Communists on the road and drink in the saga of their suffering is biographically accurate, yet it feels dramatically forced. In the end, the film might best be read as a high-class, episodic buddy picture, with the tubby, more skeptical Al-



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Oliver Stone's "Alexander," starring Colin Farrell, opens this week.

berto (he's like a young Robert Donat) observing with interest the spark of indignation—and the air of chaste reticence—in his impossibly handsome pal.—A.L. (9/27/04) (Battery Park 11, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, and Sunshine Cinema.)

THE POLAR EXPRESS

Chris Van Allsburg's twenty-nine-page picture book about a young boy's travels to the North Pole to meet Santa Claus gets an expanded, expensive retelling in Robert Zemeckis's Christmas bauble. The film is a hybrid of sorts—a computer-animated movie filmed with live actors in a process called "performance capture." This technique makes for a gorgeous holiday card (the digital backgrounds twinkle and shine), but the look of the "captured" characters is something of a disappointment. Tom Hanks (in a number of roles) and the other actors do a nice job of voicing their parts, but the waxy animated faces they've been given are off-putting. It's a bit like watching mannequins act.—B.D. (Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 24, Kips Bay Theatre, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, Union Square, and Ziegfeld.)

RAY

Swaying from side to side, his back arched almost to the point of snapping, Jamie Foxx, as Ray Charles, seems pulled upward to the heavens and downward to the keys at the same time. This intelligent and tough-minded bio-pic, written by James L. White and Taylor Hackford and directed by Hackford, tells us a lot about Charles, but it doesn't tell us everything. Though properly awed by Charles's talent, "Ray" refuses to get chummy or possessive. The movie picks up Charles's story in the late forties, when he's an ambitious but wary teen-age musician, and carries him through his musical innovations and his personal pleasures and torments until 1964, when he's a world-famous artist and a miserable heroin addict. There's something both joyous and demonic about this guy, an insatiable energy in his insistence on driving soul and country sounds into the beats of R. & B. For many older people in the audience, the sound of Ray Charles's music is inseparable from memories of dating, dancing, love-

making, and loss. The movie has the bold good grace to honor the enraptured kids they once were and the sterner but still hungry grownups they became.—D.D. (11/8/04) (Battery Park 11, Chelsea West, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

SIDEWAYS

Paul Giamatti has no chin to speak of, a round-shouldered physique, and the nervous smile of a craven dog. He's the anti-ideal of the American male, and he's making a brilliant career of it. In this wonderful new movie by the team of Alexander Payne (writer-director) and Jim Taylor (co-writer), Giamatti plays Miles, a failed novelist around forty who takes off for a wine-tasting tour with his buddy Jack (Thomas Haden Church), a washed-up TV actor who is about to get married. What starts as a last fling at freedom becomes for the two men—but centrally for Miles—a confrontation with middle age and stasis. Miles is a bibliophile, a cinephile, and an oenophile. Jack, however, couldn't care less—in every way, he's blissfully indiscriminating. On the road, the men meet Maya (Virginia Madsen), a divorced graduate student who works as a waitress, and Stephanie (Sandra Oh), a sexy "pour girl." The music and the camera setups are at times pedestrian, but the rest of "Sideways" is vivid and bitterly funny.—D.D. (10/25/04) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, East 85th Street, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square.)

TARNATION

"Notes from the Underground" hits the age of the iMac, and it's not a pretty sight. Jonathan Caouette is a young Texan filmmaker who was raised in dismaying, sometimes brutal, circumstances and who has now trawled through them for evidence. The result is part trip, part secret journal, spliced together into a lurid public memorandum. We learn of his mother, Renee, who, by the time she bore Jonathan, in the early nineteen-seventies, had already suffered electroshock treatment and a violent marriage. Her son was farmed out to foster parents, who maintained the cycle of harm. There is one scene in which, as a boy of eleven, he stages a plaintive drag act, and, watching it, you

can barely imagine a more disturbed child; whether such disturbance makes for coherent, let alone tactful, filmmaking is another question. There are moments of graphic beauty here (Gus Van Sant, unsurprisingly, was the executive producer), but also smears of unpleasantness; if the middle-aged, once radiant Renee is now a picture of emotional damage, is it right for a loving son to trap her ravings on camera and put them on show?—A.L. (10/18/04) (Film Forum.)

TEAM AMERICA: WORLD POLICE

Trey Parker and Matt Stone, the unruly spirits behind the "South Park" series, return with their second feature film, a satirical extravaganza with an all-puppet cast. The puppets have large, lambent eyes, and, compared to some Hollywood stars, their faces are actually very expressive. Parker and Stone have a lot of devious fun with their helpless toys: they blow them up, feed them to fish, and capture them in gymnastic moments of intimacy (this last stunt almost earned the film an NC-17 rating). The story has a team of U.S. Special Forces flying out of their base inside Mt. Rushmore to find weapons of mass destruction, a scenario that provides plenty of opportunity to send up G.I. Joe heroism, where America is always coming to save the day! Parker and Stone's recklessness has (and evokes) a certain giddiness, but this is satire via body blow. Still, the movie is hilarious, and filled with dare-you-to-laugh moments.—Michael Agger (Battery Park 11, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

LA TERRA TREMA

Luchino Visconti's neorealist tragedy, set among exploited Sicilian fishermen, is long and full of political clichés, and yet in its solemnity and beauty it achieves a true epic vision. The film is lyrical yet austere, and it's beautifully proportioned. It may be the best boring movie ever made: although you might have to get up and stretch a few times, you're not likely to want to leave. Filmed on location in Acitrezza, Sicily. The assistant directors were Francesco Rosi and Franco Zeffirelli. The script is by Visconti. In Sicilian dialect. Released in 1947.—P.K. (BAM Rose Cinemas; Nov. 29.)

VERA DRAKE

In its limited way, perfect. The title character in Mike Leigh's new movie is a middle-aged cleaning lady (Imelda Staunton) who races through her London working-class neighborhood singing to herself. The time is 1950, and though the dark and depressed city still suffers from wartime austerities Vera brings the light. The short, pudding-faced woman drops in on invalids, offers a few words of sympathy, and then makes her way to the luxurious flats of the wealthy, whose objets d'art and fireplace grills she dusts and polishes, sometimes on her knees. Vera gives of herself freely and easily, and it is precisely in that selfless and attentive way—brisk, efficient, consoling—that, using a tube and a noxious solution, she terminates one unwanted pregnancy after another. Working with an almost preternatural calm, Leigh sets up the repressive and sexually inarticulate atmosphere of the time; Vera's furtive activity is part of an entire system of shadowy reticence and embarrassed dithering. And Leigh captures, without sentimentality or condescension, the grave and stolid spirit of the English working class. The movie is hushed and intense; it evokes an entire way of life. With Phil Davis as Vera's husband, Stan. Photographed, with immaculate fidelity to a dun-colored London, by Dick Pope.—D.D. (10/11/04) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Cinema 2, Empire 25, and Lincoln Square.)

ALSO PLAYING

NATIONAL TREASURE

Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Kips Bay Theatre, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.

NEW GUY

Pioneer Theatre.

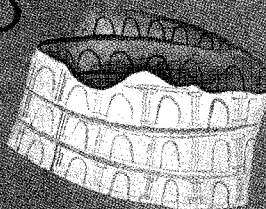


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Battery Park 11, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25,
Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum
VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 212-777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 11, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St.
(212-924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
(212-398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave.
(212-727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
(212-757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 66th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (212-688-3800).
Pioneer Theatre, 155 E. 3rd St.
(212-254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 143 E. Houston St.
(212-330-8182).
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—
Martial-arts classics. Nov. 26 at 7:30: "Sword in
the Moon" (2003, Kim Eui-seok; in Korean). ♦
Through Dec. 12: "Fort Lee: The Film Town."
Nov. 27 at 2: "The Great Adventure" (1918, Alice
Guy-Blaché). ♦ Nov. 27 at 4: "Phil for Short"
(1919, Oscar Apfel). ♦ Nov. 28 at 2: "On Danger-
ous Ground" (1917, Robert Thornby). ♦ Nov. 28
at 4: "The Flapper" (1920, Alan Crosland). ♦ Rep-
ertory nights. Nov. 27-28 at 6:30: "Belle de Jour"
(†). ♦ Michael Mann films. Nov. 30 at 7: "Heat"
(1995).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5110)—
"Essential cinema." Nov. 26 at 8: "Wavelength"
(1967, Michael Snow). ♦ Nov. 27 at 5: "<->" (1969,
Snow). ♦ Nov. 27 at 7:30: "Carriage Trade" (1973,
Warren Sonbert). ♦ Nov. 28 at 5: Two films
by Jack Smith. ♦ Nov. 28 at 7: Four films by
Harry Smith. ♦ Nov. 28 at 9: "No. 12: Heaven
and Earth Magic" (1950-61, Harry Smith). ♦
Starting Nov. 26: The New York African Dias-
pora Film Festival. For a complete schedule, see
www.nyadff.org.

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—
The films of Luchino Visconti. Nov. 25-26 at
4 and 8: "Rocco and His Brothers" (1960). ♦
Nov. 27-28 at 4 and 8: "The Leopard" (1963). ♦

Nov. 29 at 4:30 and 8: "La Terra Trema" (†). ♦ Nov. 30 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Bellissima" (1951).

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Nov. 24-25 at 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, and 9:30: "Days of Being Wild" (1991, Wong Kar-wai; in Cantonese). ♦ Starting Nov. 26: "Essential Noir." Nov. 26-28 at 1:10, 5:20, and 9:50: "Double Indemnity" (†). ♦ Nov. 26-28 at 3:15 and 7:30: "Mildred Pierce" (†). ♦ Nov. 29 at 1:05, 4:25, and 7:45: "Criss Cross" (1949, Robert Siodmak). ♦ Nov. 29 at 3, 6:20, and 9:40: "Detour" (1945, Edgar G. Ulmer). ♦ Nov. 30 at 1:05, 4:35, and 8:05: "Force of Evil" (1948, Abraham Polonsky). ♦ Nov. 30 at 2:40, 6:10, and 9:40: "The Naked City" (1948, Jules Dassin).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL

55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—Through Dec. 21: "Sisters: Dorelac and Deneuve." Nov. 30 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Repulsion" (1965, Roman Polanski).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—Through Jan. 31: "Premières," new films and recent restorations. Nov. 24 at 5 and Nov. 27 at 5:30: "Lost and Found" (2004, Jeff Scher), "Le Lion Volatil" (2003, Agnès Varda; in French), and "Words in Process" (2004, Gilles Jacob). ♦ Nov. 24 at 6:15 and Nov. 27 at 7: "Prologue" (2004, Bela Tarr) and "Paths of Glory" (1958, Stanley Kubrick). ♦ Nov. 24 at 7:30: Ernie Gehr films. ♦ Nov. 26 at 8:45: "Love Me Tonight" (†). ♦ Nov. 26 at 5 and Nov. 28 at 2:30: "Tall: The American Skyscraper and Louis Sullivan" (2004, Manfred Kirchheimer). ♦ Nov. 26 at 6:15: "Recruits in Ingolstadt" (1970, Rainer Werner Fassbinder; in German). ♦ Nov. 26 at 7:30: "Clean Thursday" (2003, Aleksandr Rastorguev; in Russian). ♦ Nov. 26 at 8:30 and Nov. 28 at 2: "Avanim" (2003, Raphaël Nadjari; in Hebrew). ♦ Nov. 27 at 2:30: "Twelve Chairs" (2004, Ulrike Ottinger; in Russian and German). ♦ Nov. 27 at 2:30: "Moments Choisis des Histoire(s) du Cinéma" (2004, Jean-Luc Godard; in French). ♦ Nov. 28 at 5: "Kamikaze 1989" (1981, Wolf Gremm; in German). ♦ Nov. 28 at 5:30: "The Art and Technique of the American Television Commercial" (2004). ♦ Nov. 29 at 7: "Z Channel: A Magnificent Obsession" (2004, Xan Cassavetes). ♦ Nov. 29 at 7:30: "Five" (2004, Abbas Kiarostami).

SUNSHINE CINEMA

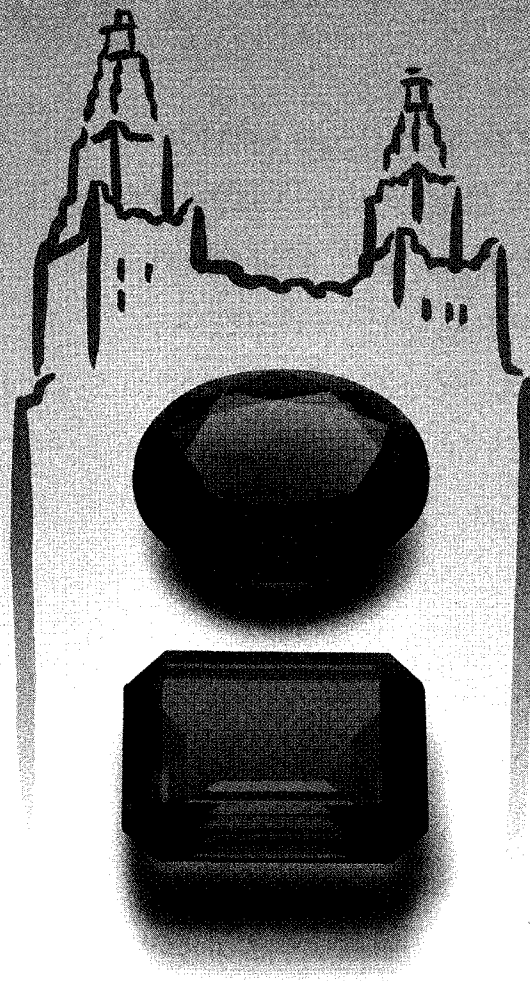
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—Midnight movies. Nov. 24-27: "The Big Lebowski" (1998, Joel Coen).

THALIA THEATRE

Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—Through Nov. 28: "The Golden Age of Mexican Melodramas." All films are in Spanish. Nov. 27 at 6: "Enamorada" (1946, Emilio Fernández). ♦ Nov. 28 at 1: "Aventurera" (1950, Alberto Gout).

WALTER READE THEATRE

Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through Dec. 7: "The Newest Tiger: Sixty Years of South Korean Cinema." Nov. 24 at 1 and 7:20: "First Love" (1993, Lee Myung-se). ♦ Nov. 24 at 3:10 and 9:30: "A Petal" (1996, Jang Sun-woo). ♦ Nov. 24 at 5:10 and Nov. 25 at 9:15: "A Hot Roof" (1996, Lee Min-Yong). ♦ Nov. 25 at 5 and Nov. 26 at 5:15: "The Coachman" (1961, Kang Tae-jin). ♦ Nov. 25 at 7:15 and Nov. 27 at 5:20: "The Marine That Didn't Come Home" (1963, Lee Man-hui). ♦ Nov. 26 at 1 and 7:20: "Green Fish" (1997, Lee Chang-dong). ♦ Nov. 26 at 3:10 and 9:30: "Birdcage Inn" (1998, Kim Ki-duk). ♦ Nov. 27 at 1 and 7:20: "The Power of Kangwon Province" (1998, Hong Sang-soo). ♦ Nov. 27 at 3:10 and 9:30: "Nowhere to Hide" (1999, Lee Myung-se). ♦ Nov. 28 at 2 and 6:30: "Daughters of Kim's Pharmacy" (1963, Yu Hyunmok). ♦ Nov. 28 at 4:10 and 8:40: "South and North" (1965, Kim Ki-duk). ♦ Nov. 29 at 2 and 6:30: "Spring in My Hometown" (1998, Lee Kwang-mo). ♦ Nov. 29 at 4:20 and 8:45: "Take Care of My Cat" (2001, Jeong Jae-eun). ♦ Nov. 30 at 1 and 7:25: "The Village by the Sea" (1965, Kim Suyong). ♦ Nov. 30 at 2:50: "Why Has Bodhi Dharma Left for the East?" (1989, Bae Yong-kyan). ♦ Nov. 30 at 5:30 and 9:10: "The Road to Sampo" (1975, Lee Man-hui).



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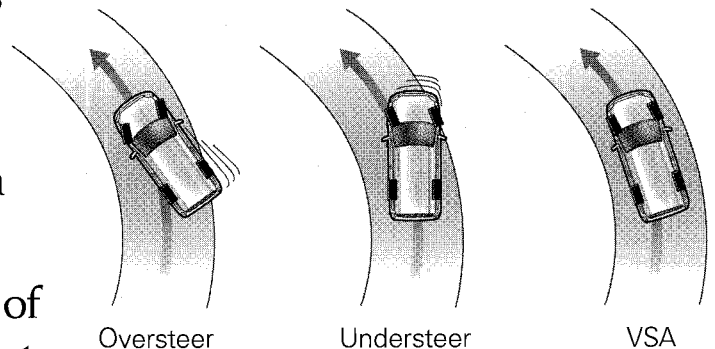
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Commitment to safety.

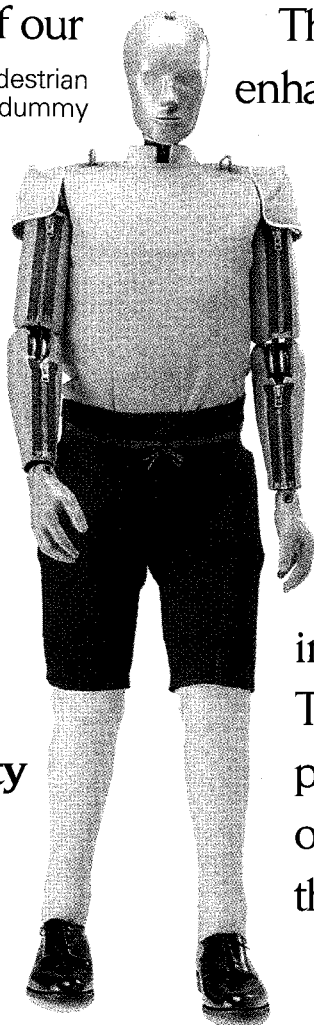
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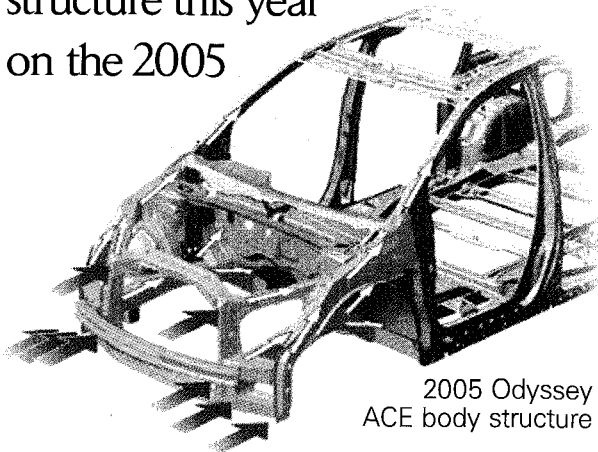
Honda pedestrian
test dummy



Honda Odyssey and Acura RL.

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2005 Odyssey
ACE body structure

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THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT MORE WAR



The city has been seized. We have liberated the city of Falluja,” General John Abizaid declared on November 14th, six days after the Marines began their assault on Iraq’s notorious insurgent stronghold. The Sunni warlords who had run Falluja as their own jihadi fiefdom—terrorizing its inhabitants and using it as a launchpad for a relentless campaign of suicide bombings, ambushes, kidnappings, and assassinations—have been routed. But Abizaid was right to emphasize that it was the battlefield, and not the battle, that was won. In this regard, Falluja appears emblematic of the larger American venture in Iraq, where military superiority has yet to purchase political order. Much of the city was reduced to rubble, and the fighting was not finished when the General claimed victory: even as Iraqi corpse collectors and American reconstruction assessors went to work, marines kept killing and getting killed while trying to mop up neighborhoods that they thought they’d mopped up the day before. “I am here,” a defiant insurgent

leader told the *Washington Post*. “You can see me.” Indeed, his comrades were suddenly to be seen all over Iraq. As Falluja fell, the insurgents struck in Baghdad and Baiji and Balad and Baquba and Buhritz and Hawija and Hit and Iskandariyah and Mosul and Qaim and Ramadi and Samarra and Tall Afar and Tikrit.

When the Bush Administration invaded Iraq, it never anticipated that it would still be conducting major combat operations a year and a half later, just two months before the country’s first nationwide elections are supposed to take place. Of course, there never was a serious plan for after the invasion, since planning

would have involved a realistic assessment of risks—the sort of cautionary vision that Colin Powell’s State Department represented within the Administration, and which Donald Rumsfeld’s Pentagon brushed aside. Rumsfeld believed that Iraq’s old order of tyranny could be dismantled and replaced by democracy on the cheap and on the fly, with just half the number of troops that top military commanders recommended. Rumsfeld was wrong—the experiment has resulted in disaster. In this respect, too, the battle for Falluja is a microcosm of the over-all Iraqi predicament: as an attempt to compensate for the ceding of the city to the insurgents last April, it is less a measure of progress than a corrective to past blunders. (Many of the weapons now killing Americans are the same ones that the Americans allowed Iraqis to keep when they disbanded Saddam’s army.)

For six months, the war was placed on hold while George W. Bush campaigned for a second term. He won, even though most Americans, including leaders in his own party, believe that he has mishandled Iraq. Bush himself, in a rare moment of candor during the campaign, described the war as “a catastrophic success,” and he might have taken his election as an opportunity to approach Iraq with a fresh hand. Instead, he has chosen to pretend that his failed policies now enjoy a popular mandate, and, while



ILLUSTRATIONS BY GERALD SCARFE

the fighting raged in Falluja, he retooled his Cabinet to consolidate power in the hands of the advisers—Condoleezza Rice, Alberto Gonzales, Stephen Hadley, and Rumsfeld—most intimately associated with the war's most ill-conceived strategies. Instead of a Cabinet, Bush now has a chorus, and, in lieu of a policy, he has an alibi: Iraq is a sovereign state again, and America is there only to support the interim President, Iyad Allawi. (According to this conceit, Bush—who accused John Kerry of scheming to subject American military actions to international approval—did not send the Marines into Falluja; he merely allowed them to fight there on Allawi's orders.)

It is said that putting an Iraqi face on the conquest of Falluja helped soothe Arab outrage at the spectacle of that city, which is revered for its mosques, being smashed into submission. (Disgust with the jihadi insurgents also contributed to an initial reservation of Arab judgment.) The line from Washington is that Iraqis must learn to organize and defend their newfound freedom. But Iraq's fledgling security forces are no match for their insurgent foes: last week, when rebels from Falluja staged attacks in Mosul, the Iraqi police and national guard capitulated with hardly a fight.

Against this violent backdrop, it seems improbable that the entire country will be sufficiently pacified, much less organized, to take part in a January election. With America's allies steadily ducking out of the Iraq coalition, and international aid groups also in rapid retreat, the United Nations has yet to muster the orchestrators and observers whose presence is considered critical to conducting a credibly free and fair vote. No precise date has yet been set for the election, which appears destined to break down along sectarian and tribal lines—creating a political domination by the Shiite majority, with no great incentive for participation by the Sunni minority, whose leaders are threatening to boycott the ballot. The long-persecuted Kurds are also chary. In the meantime, Allawi imposed a nationwide state of emergency.

"You cannot have a country that is free and democratic and respectful of all the people in the country if you have safe havens for people who go around chopping people's heads off," Rumsfeld told reporters as the Marines swept into Fal-

luja. "You can't have a country if that's the case." By that formulation, the insurgents have the advantage, since the Americans cannot control all of Iraq, or even hold the territory they conquer each time the insurgents lure them into battle. Guerrilla fighters need only thwart a great power to claim victory, but a great power must deliver on its promises—and there are none greater than the promises of freedom, stability, and democracy that the President has made to the Iraqi people. But Bush, instead of addressing the fact that the promises have not been fulfilled, has taken to accusing his critics of racism. "I readily concede there are skeptics, people who say democracy is not possible in certain societies," he said on the fourth day of the fight for Falluja. "But, remember, that was said right after World War II, with Japan." The analogy is as inept as it is grandiose: for one thing, Japan attacked us before we vanquished it and converted it to democracy; for another, the American occupiers of Japan were in no hurry to declare success and bail out. Still, it is true that the trouble in Iraq is not an indigenous incapacity for freedom and self-rule. The trouble is with the way that Bush imagined he could impose those blessings on such a vexed country—as if simply to be invaded by America is a form of salvation. "First we blow up your house, then we pay you to rebuild it," a colonel in Falluja told the *Times*, while marine intelligence officers warned that the devastation of the city makes it fertile ground for a reinvigorated insurgency. In Falluja, as in Iraq as a whole, the challenge is to maintain sufficient control to be able to repair the damage that military victory has inflicted. Judging from the Administration's record, that will be the hard part.

—Philip Gourevitch

EXCAVATION DEPT. FOUND



The new exhibition in the Tisch Galleries at the Metropolitan Museum of Art—"China: Dawn of a Golden Age"—opens with a beautiful parade of bronze figures. There are fourteen horses,

four chariots, ten human riders, and three attendants on foot. Each object stands less than two feet tall, and the horses are remarkably detailed: alert eyes, flared mouths, intricate saddles. The bronzes were tomb offerings, and they date to the third century, at the end of the Han dynasty. The Met's display caption includes a single sentence describing the artifacts' rediscovery, in 1969: "They were found in Wuwei, Gansu, in northwest China, in the tomb of a senior official, probably the governor of the province."

The passive tense is appropriate: artifacts were found. Chinese archeologists distinguish between two types of excavation: *zhudong* and *beidong*, "active" and "passive." An active excavation is deliberate, planned, and relatively rare. Throughout the past century, it's been far more common for important discoveries to occur purely by chance. A construction project stumbles upon an ancient city; a peasant digs clay and accidentally uncovers a forgotten tomb. It's essentially Taoist: the effectiveness of non-action. You're most likely to find treasures when you're not searching for them.

The Met show purports to explore the idea of cultural exchange—China's early contacts with the world to the west. There are more than three hundred artifacts, most of them on loan from Chinese institutions, and the pieces span the period from 200 to 750 A.D. Many reflect Central Asian influence; some even have Roman motifs. But from another perspective the show is a monument to the chaotic energy of modern China; the majority of the objects were discovered through passive excavations. A particularly large percentage appeared during the past twenty years, as the booming Chinese economy turned cities into construction sites. And before the boom there were other campaigns, other cultural exchanges.

The parade of bronze figures, for example, was rediscovered in Wuwei, a dusty, forgotten town where locals are usually happy to talk to outsiders. A couple of years ago, I asked Tian Zhi-cheng, then the curator of the Wuwei museum, to tell the story behind the bronzes, of which the most famous piece is known as the "Flying Horse" (that particular object is not included in the Met exhibit). Tian said that the artifacts had been discovered accidentally, at



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the height of the Cultural Revolution.

"They found the horse on September 23, 1969," he said. "Marshal Lin Biao had told the Chinese people that they should dig air-raid shelters, in case China was attacked by the Soviet Union or America. The local peasants dug underneath a Taoist temple, and that's where they found the bronzes. When the peasants uncovered the pieces, they just shared them. One peasant took a chariot, another took a horse, and so on. Most of the bronzes ended up in people's homes.

"Eventually, people from the Wuwei cultural-relics bureau collected all the objects. They took them to the provincial museum in Lanzhou, where they put them in a storeroom. They didn't recognize the value of those pieces.

"Nobody really noticed them until the early nineteen-seventies, when Guo Moruo"—a poet, playwright, and historian—"was accompanying Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia on a trip through Gansu. They toured the museum, and afterward Guo Moruo asked to see the storeroom. The moment he set eyes on the 'Flying Horse,' he knew that it was something special. He said that it was by far the best object in the museum. And that's how it first became famous." Then Tian remarked that some of the original excavators still lived in the area, and they might know details about the dig itself.

Near the site, a woman offered the name of a peasant excavator called Wang. The man lived in a simple dugout that had been carved into the dry Gansu soil—a cave with small windows and a door. His wife answered the knock. She didn't seem at all happy to see a foreigner on her doorstep.

"He can't talk to you," she said.

In the Chinese countryside, when women reach middle age, they often acquire a certain solidness that seems to draw from the earth itself. It's also true that in these areas a foreigner tends to attract a crowd. The more people who showed up, the more solid Wang's wife became. She stood in front of the door, arms crossed. At one point, she remarked that the excavation had been unofficial and she didn't want trouble. Every attempt was made to reassure her: there's

no risk; this is a story about history; it will only take a minute—

"He's too drunk to talk to you," she said finally.

The crowd began to murmur in support of the foreigner. At last, she shrugged and stepped aside. "Go ahead."

Inside: as dank as a tomb, as dirty as a dump. A half-dressed man was sprawled



on a wooden chair—skinny arm dangling over the floor, white head lolling straight back. Wang, amateur archeologist, discoverer of lost bronzes, was snoring. The cave reeked like a *baijiu* distillery. It was approximately seven thousand miles from the Tisch Galleries at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

—Peter Hessler

DEPT. OF SCHOOL SPIRIT FARM TEAM



The aftermath of an election follows a certain predictable cycle: mourning (on the part of the losers) gives way to soul-searching (both sides), and soon enough the speculative horse race is in full swing, with future contenders jockeying for early position and handicappers assessing the odds. Here in New York, on the Tuesday after Election Day, City Council Speaker Gifford Miller, a Democrat, of course, and a prospective candidate in the

beat-Bloomberg sweepstakes, issued a manifesto, "A Message from Gifford," to hundreds of local donors and politicians. "While we are angry and disappointed, it is vital that we continue the fight," Miller wrote. "Our City can be a model of contrast to the Republicans' extreme policies, as we lead the way not just on educating our children and emergency preparedness, but on issues like choice, gun control and stem cell research."

The City Council, by convention a rubber-stamping, ribbon-cutting sort of institution, might not seem an ideal incubator for a national progressive revival, but Miller is not alone in thinking it can be. In certain Council circles, the phrase "farm team for Democracy" has recently achieved currency as a motivating mantra. The prospects—a half-dozen ambitious young Council members—view municipal government as a laboratory for developing ideas and agendas that might be replicated in, say, Gary, Indiana, as one Queens councilman, Eric Gioia, suggested last week.

For instance: Where better than New York to demonstrate the potential clout of the religious left? ("Brooklyn is called the Borough of Churches, for God's sake," one Council aide said.) "I always talk about Matthew," Gioia explained. "When I was hungry, did you give me food? When I was thirsty, did you give me drink? When I was in prison, did you give me comfort? This is New Testament stuff. Well, that's Democratic stuff." He added, "My hope is eventually we're going to show the Party how to win again."

So, then: The same day that Speaker Miller sent out his call to arms, he held a press conference on the steps of City Hall, flanked by the twin eminences Barbara Walters and Ivana Trump, to raise awareness for an impending piece of legislation known as Jazzy's Law. It is a kennel-regulation ordinance inspired by the untimely death of a Yorkshire terrier (Jazzy) that belonged to the gossip columnist Cindy Adams. Miller, who has two cats, said, "There is no tragedy short of losing a child that can cause such enormous grief for people as losing a pet."

Eva Moskowitz, who represents much of Manhattan's East Side, convened a



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hearing, that same morning, to discuss the condition of our schools. (She was named to the Democratic Leadership Council's "100 to Watch" list last year.) Specifically, she wanted to address a glaring failure in the custodial-services department: inadequate bathroom supplies. In front of an audience that included a woman wearing a roll of Charmin on a rope around her neck, Moskowitz cited the Geneva Conventions while delivering her salvo. (A union rep accused her of "grandstanding.") "I don't know what language I have to speak," Moskowitz said. "There isn't a sufficient amount of toilet paper."

Nobody ever said that the revolution would be easy—or glamorous. David Yassky, whom the D.L.C. recently named "New Dem of the Week," is rumored to be preparing a run for District Attorney. But in the near term Yassky, a sort of Jewish John Edwards, with glasses, has a few policy plans to audition locally, in his North Brooklyn district. Yassky brings a healthy mixture of idealism ("Here is the perfect place to build a model of doing government that you can trust, and show other people") and cynicism ("Can you name a single bill that the City Council has passed—seriously?") to the farm-team game.

The other night, Yassky met with a church group in Park Slope which had been sending him postcards about the crisis in Darfur, Sudan, and, while he felt a little ridiculous taking an official stand, in his capacity as a Brooklyn Heights councilman, on the genocide in Africa, he thought he might try to interest the group in some other moral causes, closer to home. There was his affordable-housing initiative, for instance, which related to the recent rezoning of the North Brooklyn waterfront. (He distributed pre-written "Dear Mayor Bloomberg" letters in support of his position.) And then, regarding the environment, he asked, "Why can't all the taxis be hybrids?"

The church's pastor interrupted: "Why can't the ambulances turn off their engines while schoolchildren are walking by?"

Baby steps. "That's a new one," Yassky replied, looking momentarily baffled, then deflated. "We can call them and ask them not to do that. We're pretty good at nagging people."

He regained his idealistic steam, and started talking about various ways of combatting gun manufacturers, even

those based outside New York. "To me, we've got to develop a tradition of helping people," he said, "so that when we say we're going to fix health care we have a record of actually doing something."

A woman piped up. "Your office actually helped us," she said. "Our road was getting torn up, and we had a vermin problem. . . ."

—Ben McGrath

CONTRABAND PSST! GOT MILK?



In a Hell's Kitchen basement the other day, Manhattan's first shipment of raw milk—unpasteurized, unlicensed, un-homogenized, and illegally transported across state lines—was delivered to the grateful, if wary, members of a private raw-milk coven. Claudia K., a herbalist and community gardener, had masterminded the drop-off through e-mails to a secret Listserv of lacto-fermentation scofflaws. Claudia's messages included price lists (\$4.25 per gallon of raw milk, \$4 for a quart of raw yogurt), a downloadable contract, and an appeal: "Please do not forward this e-mail to anyone. . . . We ask this because of the legal constraints put on us for the sale of raw milk."

Milk straight from the cow has become a new obsession of New York's raw-food disciples, who believe that it works as a "milk cure" for ailments as varied as hypertension, heart disease, chronic gastritis, and psoriasis. They dispute accusations (made by the F.D.A., among other dairy-industry stooges) that raw-milk products contain high levels of pathogens that can cause salmonella, brucellosis, and tuberculosis.

The raw-milk question goes way back, in these parts. In pre-Revolutionary Manhattan, the sale of milk seems to have been forbidden in public markets. In a letter to a newspaper in 1763, a dairy zealot channelled the voice of milk itself: "What can or may be the reasons that I am not admitted or ordered into the public markets? Tho' that I am the support and only nourishment of almost every creature, the poorer sort of mankind are deprived of me, as they cannot bribe my bearers."

Over the years, the sale of raw milk has been so restricted that it has become virtually impossible to buy.

Before the drop-off in Hell's Kitchen, Nathan Donahoe, a massage therapist, was helping set up tables for three jumbo coolers of contraband dairy products that a Mennonite farmer had sent from Pennsylvania. "These guys are saving people's lives," Donahoe said. "I was allergic to milk for ten years. But I found out if I have raw milk I can drink as much as I want." Donahoe related a baroque history of ailments, including attention-deficit disorder, bipolar disorder, and chronic fatigue syndrome. "I started raw milk only a month ago," he said. "But I feel incredible."

By 6:15 P.M., the customers had begun to show up, greeting one another with silent nods. They eyed strangers with suspicion. Rumor had it that an angry vegan might be infiltrating the ranks. "All you need is one person in the dairy world to tell someone else," Claudia said. At precisely six-thirty, the coolers were opened, revealing a tightly packed stash of bootleg milk, butter, cream cheese, and feta. The farmer, baby-faced and dressed in black jeans, began filling brown paper bags with his goods.

Wayne Burkey, a real-estate broker, who lives in Tribeca with his wife and two-year-old twins, was loading up a grocery cart. "I don't consume any of this," he said. He admitted to liking hot dogs. "We do this for the children. They've never been sick. Not even a cold."

A dog walker named Danny took a philosophical view. "This is a challenge to the commodification of life itself," he said, before adding that he regularly ingests raw animal foods, such as cow hearts. "I clean off any arteries, cut it into small pieces, and I eat it."

"No marinade?" someone asked. "No mustard?"

"I just cut it up," he said. "I'm a minimalist."

After an hour, Claudia was getting tired. "I am spending so much of my life for this," she said. "Sometimes I think, What am I doing it for?" She lowered her voice. "The thing I'm most protective about is the farmer." She looked over at him. His supply had sold out, and he was packing up the empty coolers, his pocket stuffed with crumpled checks and dollar bills.

—Frederick Kaufman

Smoke detectors Taximeters Airport screening devices Batteries Exit signs Conveyor belts Diapers Water disinfection Laboratory planning and design High-speed serial data cable assemblies Pneumatic filters Electric valve actuators Warning lights Coffee cups Power strips Strainers Electrical raceways Integrated fire protection cabinets Static control devices PC boards Master terminal boxes Lighting controls Bus and expansion slot connectors Subsystem integration and full-system assembly Variable-flow regulator assemblies Protection against electrical supply interruption Abrasion protection products Vehicle tactical repeaters Air conditioning equipment and systems Multi-coaxial cables Nasopharyngeal sensors Wastewater treatment plant design and engineering Rotational sensors Micro K relays Industrial automation Plastic knives, forks, and spoons Fire and emergency annunciators Drawer connectors LEDs Microelectronic sub-assembly Firefighter breathing systems Ground fault detector protective relays Solenoids Heavy-duty miniature applicators Absorbents and desiccants Voice networks Sea plows for undersea excavation Insulators Medical electrode gels Welded steel tubing Micropatch antennas Filters Thermocouple cables Avionics Polyethylene stretch films Backplane connector systems **Aircraft wire and power cables** Lamps Conformal antennas Serving trays Battery chargers Drills Panel boards Audio receivers Wire basket cable trays Pressure vessel clamps Snow melting mats Matrix switchers Amplitude measurement equipment Salve Telephony analysis Automatic door controls Well cleaners and developers Automotive micro power relays Plastic protective sheeting Patch cable Automotive mini power relays Transmission line accessories Hazard detection products Building wraps Vending machine components Scales Intuitive LCD and CRT touchmonitors USB connectors Cable clamps Micropneumatic systems Cable ducting systems Sealants and gels Electrical metallic tubing set-screw connectors and couplings Insulation facers Call center monitoring services Relays with forcibly-guided contacts Spa controls Industrial control hybrids Gas masks Laser rangefinders Sodium bicarbonate based extinguishing agents Flame-retardant drapery systems Resuscitators for infants and children Digital watch parts Shade canopy accessories Barrier strips Chalkboards Therapeutic ultrasound PIN photo diode modules Medical monitoring services Check valves Resin systems Chemical oxygen generators All-in-one touch computers Chartering cable ships Elastic bandages Wireless systems Chillers Semiconductor heat sinks Digital audio services Automotives module relays Surface mounted cabinets Rotary switches Flame retardants Pressure seal closures Electric portable air compressors Circuit breakers Automotive quality inspection equipment Solid-state components Gas discharge tube replacements Components for camcorders Panel indicators Heat isolation devices Explosion-proof detectors Climate monitoring Hazardous material protective suits Solid-state subsystems Signal magnetics Passive electronics Medical oxygen delivery Grounding connectors Telescoping sign support systems Broadband driver amplifiers Champagne glasses Drinking bottles Polymeric and porcelain surge arrestors for distribution and transmission networks Automotive power relays Garment hangers Microcoaxial assemblies Snack food packaging Modern cable assemblies Industrial control switches Continuous-slot metal framing Landfill development Multi-mode radar Patch cable assemblies Shielded and coaxial cable slices Wine glasses Flame-retardant tape Range hoods Halogen-free cables for commercial and offshore applications Absorbable monofilament sutures Cable TV converters Terminals and connectors for underground networks Syringe dispensers Cordless telephone batteries Fire protection systems Tubing for outdoor furniture framing Sensor wraps Easels PIN diodes High-performance solid state relays and power controllers Wire harness tape Ceramic burners Electrical equipment for saunas Cylindrical control connectors Terminals and splices Security systems Relay sockets and accessories Arson detection Galvanized steel tubing Paperboard Counters and timers Sealed connectors Database assemblies Television sets DC converters Subcutaneous sensors Pipe and tube products Electrical tape High pass filter inductors Pistol grip hand tool systems for IDCs Adhesive tape Segmentally welded pipe fittings USB cables Construction management Deactivators International mains adaptors Suction instruments Test equipment Steel box connectors Calibration equipment and services Plastic tumblers Cable trays Verified audio defect on Thermoplastic piping systems Coaxial cable terminators Pigtail cable assemblies Waveguides Plastics engineering Institutional timekeeping Photocopiers Cabled and Low-voltage power connectors High-performance connectors Safety relief valves Access floor modules Halogen-free wire Power systems Pull-in tape flanges Connectors for high-voltage substations Flexible non-metallic conduit Reduced wall flexible metal conduit Catheters Medical-on modulators Digital metering systems Wiring harness sockets Automobile steering columns Pediatric monitoring equipment Cable design conductors Flame-retardant tubing for nuclear environments Rooftop walkways Digital products Air sampling equipment Voltage wheels Customized point-of-sale receipts Digital proofing Power tool switches Chokes Medical diagnostics Sound mixers Air traffic control equipment Digital visual interface products Vertical drain membranes and radiant barriers Cabinet power systems Wall track systems DIP switches Resistor protection Thermostats Electrical transformers High-performance RF/microwave antennas Lighting for public services Video cables Thermal circuit breakers Video endoscopy Cable assemblies Irrigation pipe Heat-tracing connectors Potassium bicarbonate-based extinguishing agents Megaphone components Calculators Institutional can liners Voltage-variable attenuators Wafer gear Varactors Coaxial cables Patient monitoring cables Drop cloths Alarms for hazardous areas Power splitters Chassis components Stormwater and wastewater monitoring and readers with web-based authentication Printer cable assemblies Engineering services Amusement machine components Discs and recorders and recorders Systems for offshore oil and gas installations Patch panels Airport lighting systems Soldering equipment Low-voltage cable systems Entry modules Microsurgical needles Cryogenic valves Wiring harness design software Automotive components and design services Parafilm disc haulers Flex and rigid circuits Diagnostic procedure trays Inkjet fluids Diagnostic analyzers **Emergency lighting** plastic sheeting Rechargeable car flashlights Memory card receptacles Spirometry systems Automatic blood pressure monitors **Coaxial and audio cable** building and construction tapes Power magnetics Exhausters Ultraviolet disinfection systems Moisture analysis equipment **Flange gaskets** with bulb elastomers Exotic alloys Professional fire department hardware Custom sterilizable cable assemblies Skin effect trace systems Dental dressings and sutures Parts for lawn and garden equipment Tape measures Flame detectors Ribbon cables Carpet backing Parallel groove clamps Graphic arts tape Extended coverage fire sprinkler heads Hand pumps Climate control monitoring Satellite radio **Emergency lighting** radio systems Jacket compounds Galvanized steel armor with PVC jackets Irrigation pump Utility cabinets Cyanoacrylate **Emergency lighting** Large-screen video projectors Eye on **Arterial extension sets** Paper mill wraps Fence framing Distribution panels Continuous **Emergency lighting** Protective breathing equipment Special purpose spiral antennas Automatic pick, place and press Power **Emergency lighting** switches Fiber-optic connectors Veterinary medical products Bypass valves Carbon dioxide gas transmitters Specialty chemicals Rainfall gauges Alarms for motor vehicles Water sampling and analysis Fingerprint identification Mobile security systems Cable ties Firefighting flares Multiplier diodes Fireproof cables Drum core magnetics Audio receivers Flexible exhaust connectors Isolators and circulators Magnet wire termination materials Dual hybrids Static measuring equipment Hand-held radios Cable management accessories Steam-tracing products Extrusion lamination Parking deck PVC-jacketed metal clad cable Factory automation cables Steelwork fixings Airport construction management Instrument wire **Emergency lighting** Cotton balls Pipe for recreational equipment Self-adhesive cable clips Multi-pair high flexibility cables Fixed cable termination adapters Butterfly valves Portable memory Components for CD recorders and players Telemetry systems Audio production services Integrated molding/plating technology Telephone systems Safety goggles Reverse cutting sutures Decorative shields Temperature and pressure gauges Commercial-quality steel tubing Laser diodes Temperature sensors Connection droppers Dry-erase marker boards Feminine hygiene products Storage tanks Analgesics First aid kits Thermal controls Computer-assisted surgery Power modules Subminiature D connectors Front-connected sockets Digital attenuators Automated teller machine components Spring pin coax probe assemblies Control panels Wet pipe sprinkler systems Alarm verification Security keypads Pain management products Helical gears Roadway and tunnel management systems Printed circuit terminals Galvanized round signposts Rocker and paddle switches Microwave components Roof and gutter heating cables Arson detection Voice amplifiers Fall arrest systems High-voltage connectors Power entry modules Custom broadband networks Steel threaded sprinkler pipe Accounting software Ultrasound cable assemblies Protective clothing for emergency workers Flare launchers Dry pipe systems Cable tie guns Broadband amplifiers Rectangular heavy-duty connectors Discharge devices Vibration dampers Electromagnetic flow readers Laser components Advanced composites Coaxial connectors Adhesive covers Flat steel plates Elastomeric connectors Passive fiber-optic hardware Singulation systems Electrosurgical devices Coffee service kits Automotive radar sensors Electrical metallic tubing compression connectors and couplings Intercommunication devices Customized valves Dry pipe valves Flexible hoses Curing ovens Insulated ground metal clad cables Digital satellite radio antennas Perimeter door and window protection systems Anemometers Cosmetic surgery needles Flexible non-metallic conduit Supply cylinder assemblies Alarm communication systems Identification products Flexible piping equipment Rayon balls

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THE FINANCIAL PAGE WHY GOLD?

One of the perks of stardom is the indulgence of unusual requests. Ozzy Osbourne used to require the presence backstage of an ear, nose, and throat specialist who could administer B-12 shots. Guns N' Roses demanded Dom Pérignon and Wonder Bread. For Van Halen, it was a bowl of M&M's—with all the brown ones removed. Then, there was Bette Midler, who, when she toured Europe in the late seventies, insisted on being paid not in dollars or pounds or francs but in gold. It was a fashionable extravagance. With inflation devastating the value of national currencies, Western economies in the dumps, and oil prices soaring because of tension in the Middle East, anxious investors had fled to the security that supposedly only gold could provide. An ounce of gold, at its peak, in 1980, was worth eight hundred and fifty dollars.

That was a long time ago, and, as far as we know, Usher has yet to pester his promoters for Krugerrands, but economic worries have recently prompted investors to start coveting gold again. The weakness of the dollar, America's enormous trade deficit, and war in the Middle East have sent the price of gold up forty per cent in the past two years, and last week it hit a sixteen-year high of four hundred and forty-five dollars an ounce. In the speculative imagination, gold remains the best hedge against Armageddon.

It also remains a testament to the tenacity of popular delusion. What is gold, after all? Strictly speaking, it's a commodity, like oil, steel, or lead, albeit not an especially useful one. There's a steady but small demand for gold as an industrial product—for consumer electronics, computers, and dental work—and as jewelry, particularly in India, which now buys twenty per cent of the world's annual gold output. And there's a steady supply. Since 1970, world production has nearly doubled, thanks to mining companies that tear up mountainsides every year in search of it.

Yet the price of gold has little to do with these two variables. To true believ-

ers—known as “gold bugs”—the idea that gold is a commodity is rank heresy. They prefer to think of gold as the planet's most reliable currency, a stable, ineradicable source of wealth, whose value will endure no matter what comes to pass.

It's hard to square this faith with what has happened to the price of gold in the past two decades. It has been a terrible investment. Even with the recent surge, it's up zero per cent since 1988, while the S. & P. 500 has almost quadrupled. Gold's buying power has plummeted, too. In 1980, ten ounces of gold would have bought you a nice car. Today, it would get you a nice bike. The gold bugs have a handy explanation: gold is a vic-



tim of market manipulation and bad press. Wall Street and the world's central banks are, apparently, “enemies of gold,” holding gold prices down in order to prop up people's confidence in the paper-money system. One gold bug even filed a lawsuit against various government officials and big banks alleging a conspiracy to sabotage gold prices with surreptitious sales. Another compared a skeptical journalist to Joseph Goebbels.

The gold bugs are classic cranks, but their obsession is rooted in experience; we've all been conditioned—by history, by myth, by Mr. T—to think of gold as money. James Bond never had to contend with a Nickelfinger, and Bette Midler would probably not have accepted payment in palladium or cowrie shells or

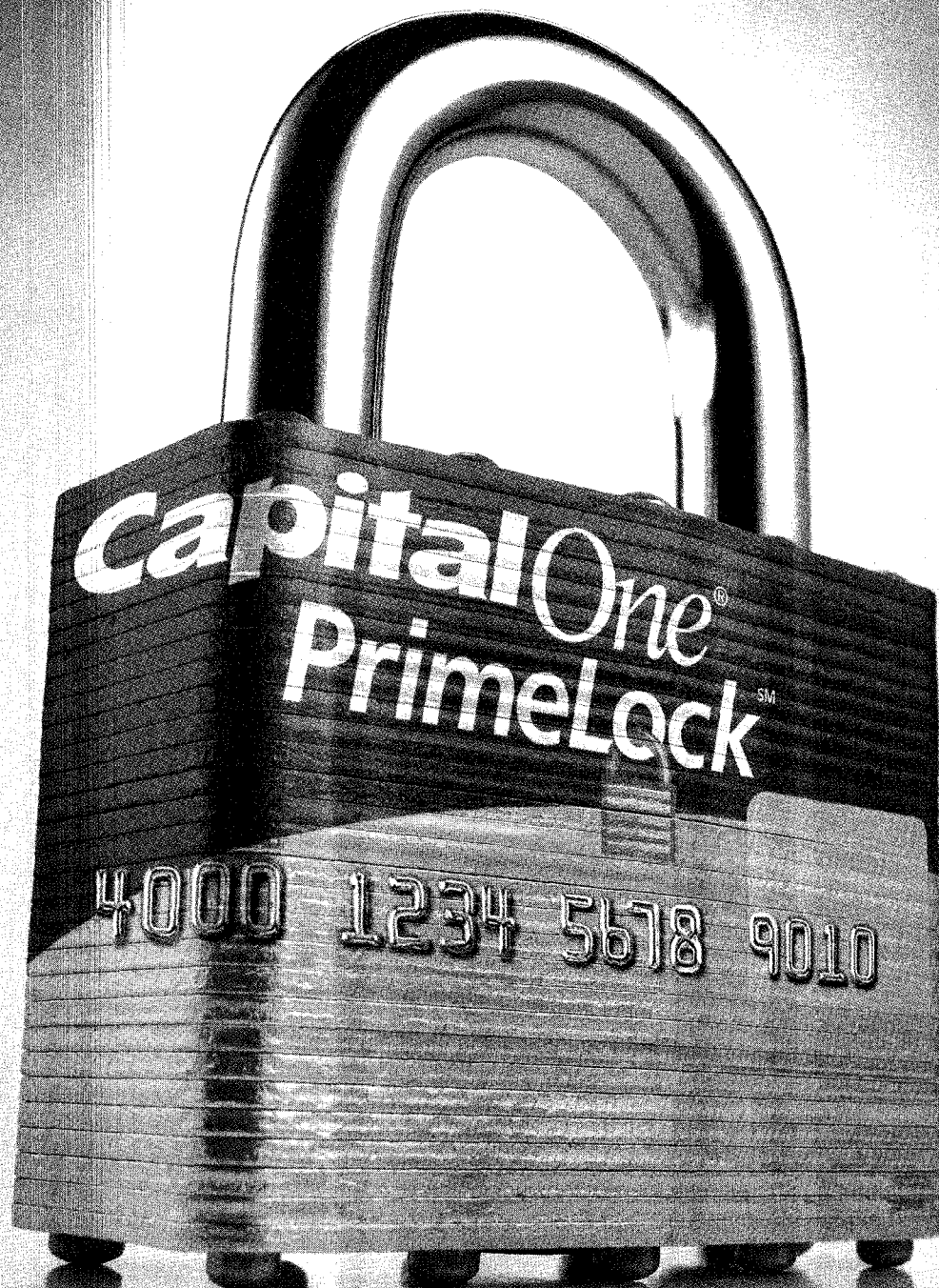
cattle. The world's central banks and the International Monetary Fund still have vaults full of bullion, even though currencies are no longer backed by gold. Governments hold on to it as a kind of magic symbol, a way of reassuring people that their money is real.

So there's a little bit of the gold bug in all of us. Still, in a world of “swaptions” and strips gold's allure is increasingly atavistic. The idea of gold as a platonic currency, universally valuable across time and space, reflects a basic distrust of markets, a fear that in a world of paper money wealth is just an illusion. For gold bugs, paper money turns us all into Wile E. Coyote—we're running on air, and we'll plummet once we look down and realize there's nothing holding us up. The gold bug's apocalyptic mentality maintains that someday the global economy will look down and the result will be chaos. Gold is the only thing that will still be valuable after the bottom drops out.

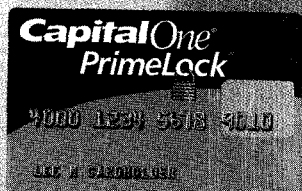
Yet gold is valuable only as long as we collectively agree that it is. It may be soft, shiny, durable, and rare, but it has no more intrinsic value than feldspar or quartz. Just because it has a long history of being used as money doesn't mean that it has a future. In the end, our trust in gold is no different from our trust in a piece of paper with “one dollar” written on it. The value of a currency is, ultimately, what someone will give you for it—whether in food, fuel, assets, or labor. And that's always and everywhere a subjective decision. Gold or not, we're always just running on air. You can't be rich unless everyone else agrees that you're rich.

Gold investors like to pride themselves on being sober realists. The irony is that buying gold is the purest form of speculation. If you invest in a company, you're investing in machinery, technology, and people. If you buy steel, you're investing in something that people need. But if you invest in gold you're basically betting that someday a greater fool will come along, who thinks gold is worth more than you do. You're buying into a collective hallucination—exactly what those dot-com investors did in the late nineties. One could say that gold is the biggest, most durable bubble in history. Someday, even this one may pop.

—James Surowiecki



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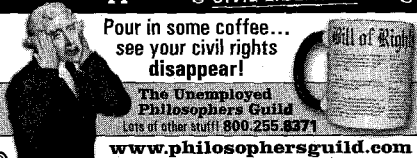
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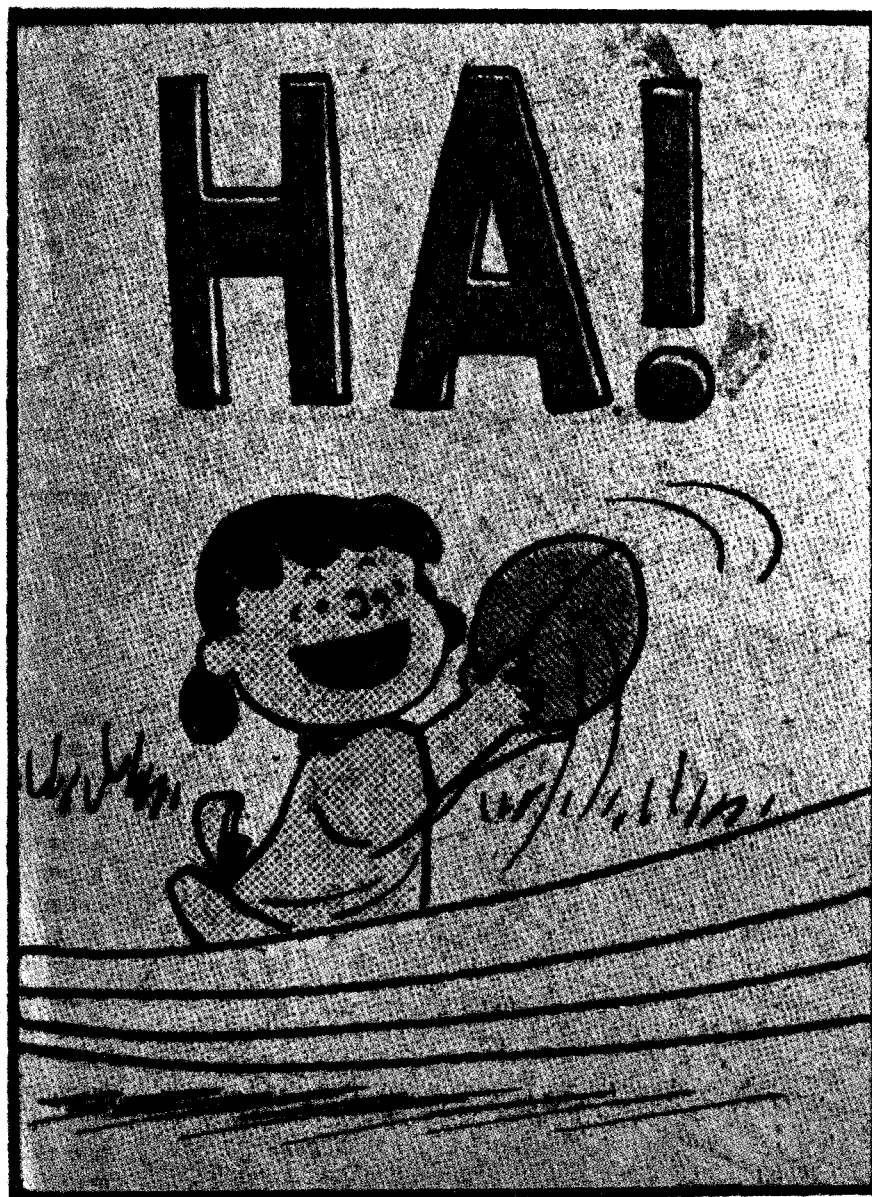
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PERSONAL HISTORY

THE COMFORT ZONE

Growing up with Charlie Brown.

BY JONATHAN FRANZEN



In May, 1970, a few nights after the Kent State shootings, my father and my brother Tom, who was nineteen, started fighting. They weren't fighting about the Vietnam War, which both of them opposed. The fight was probably about a lot of different things at once. But the immediate issue was Tom's summer job. He was a good artist, with a meticulous nature, and my father had encouraged him (you could even say

forced him) to choose a college from a short list of schools with strong programs in architecture. Tom had deliberately chosen the most distant of these schools, Rice University, and he had just returned from his second year in Houston, where his adventures in late-sixties youth culture were pushing him toward majoring in film studies, not architecture. My father, however, had found him a plum summer job with Sver-

drup & Parcel, the big engineering firm in St. Louis, whose senior partner, General Leif Sverdrup, had been a United States Army Corps of Engineers hero in the Philippines. It couldn't have been easy for my father, who was shy and morbidly principled, to pull the requisite strings at Sverdrup. But the office gestalt was hawkish and buzz-cut and

tric bills, claimed to be a devotee of "fresh air," and the windows often stayed open until Memorial Day.

On my night table was the "Peanuts Treasury," a large, thick hardcover compilation of daily and Sunday funnies by Charles M. Schulz. My mother had given it to me the previous Christmas, and I'd been rereading it at bedtime ever



COMIC STRIPS: PEANUTS: © UNITED FEATURE SYNDICATE

generally inimical to bell-bottomed, lefty film-studies majors; and Tom didn't want to be there.

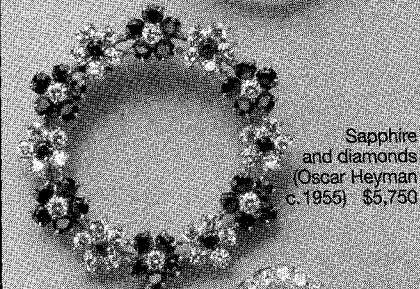
Up in the bedroom that he and I shared, the windows were open and the air had the stuffy wooden-house smell that came out every spring. I preferred the make-believe no-smell of air-conditioning, but my mother, whose subjective experience of temperature was notably consistent with low gas and elec-

since. Like most of the nation's ten-year-olds, I had an intense, private relationship with Snoopy, the cartoon beagle. He was a solitary not-animal animal who lived among larger creatures of a different species, which was more or less my feeling in my own house. My brothers, who are nine and twelve years older than I, were less like siblings than like an extra, fun pair of quasi-parents. Although I had friends and was a Cub

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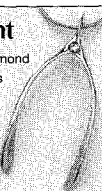
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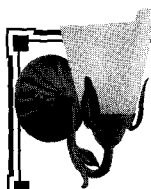


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Scout in good standing, I spent a lot of time alone with talking animals. I was an obsessive rereader of A. A. Milne and the Narnia and Doctor Dolittle novels, and my involvement with my collection of stuffed animals was on the verge of becoming age-inappropriate. It was another point of kinship with Snoopy that he, too, liked animal games. He impersonated tigers and vultures and mountain lions, sharks, sea monsters, pythons, cows, piranhas, penguins, and vampire bats. He was the perfect sunny egoist, starring in his ridiculous fantasies and basking in everyone's attention. In a cartoon strip full of children, the dog was the character I recognized as a child.

Tom and my father had been talking in the living room when I went up to bed. Now, at some late and even stuffier hour, after I'd put aside the "Peanuts Treasury" and fallen asleep, Tom burst into our bedroom. He was shouting with harsh sarcasm. "You'll get over it! You'll forget about me! It'll be so much easier! You'll get over it!"

My father was offstage somewhere, making large abstract sounds. My mother was right behind Tom, sobbing at his

Tom! Please! Tom!" And then the front door slammed.

Things like this had never happened in our house. The worst fight I'd ever witnessed was between Tom and our older brother, Bob, on the subject of Frank Zappa, whose music Tom admired and Bob one day dismissed with such patronizing disdain that Tom began to sneer at Bob's own favorite group, the Supremes, which led to bitter hostilities. But a scene of real wailing and doors slamming in the night was completely off the map. When I woke up the next morning, the memory of it already felt decades-old and semi-dreamlike and unmentionable.

My father had left for work, and my mother served me breakfast without comment. The food on the table, the jingles on the radio, and the walk to school all were unremarkable; and yet everything about the day was soaked in dread. At school that week, in Miss Niblack's class, we were rehearsing our fifth-grade play. The script, which I'd written, had a large number of bit parts and one very generous role that I'd created with my own memorization abili-

Would Tom be there, too? This was quite plausibly an innocent line of questioning—I was a small glutton for attention, forever turning conversations to the subject of myself—and, for a while, my mother gave me plausibly innocent answers. Then she slumped into a chair, put her face in her hands, and began to weep.

"Didn't you hear anything last night?" she said.

"No."

"You didn't hear Tom and Dad shouting? You didn't hear doors slamming?"

"No!"

She gathered me in her arms, which was probably the main thing I'd been dreading. I stood there stiffly while she hugged me. "Tom and Dad had a terrible fight," she said. "After you went to bed. They had a terrible fight, and Tom got his things and left the house, and we don't know where he went."

"Oh."

"I thought we'd hear from him today, but he hasn't called, and I'm frantic, not knowing where he is. I'm just frantic!"

I squirmed a little in her grip.

"But this has nothing to do with you,"



shoulder, begging him to stop, to stop. He was pulling open dresser drawers, repacking bags he'd only recently unpacked. "You think you want me here," he said, "but you'll get over it."

What about me? my mother pleaded.

What about Jon?

"You'll get over it!"

I was a small and fundamentally ridiculous person. Even if I'd dared sit up in bed, what could I have said? "Excuse me, I'm trying to sleep"? I lay still and followed the action through my eyelashes. There were further dramatic comings and goings, through some of which I may in fact have slept. Finally I heard Tom's feet pounding down the stairs and my mother's terrible cries, now nearly shrieks, receding after him: "Tom! Tom!

ties in mind. The action took place on a boat, involved a taciturn villain named Mr. Scuba, and lacked the most rudimentary comedy, point, or moral. Not even I, who got to do most of the talking, enjoyed being in it. Its badness—my responsibility for its badness—became part of the day's general dread.

There was something dreadful about springtime itself, the way plants and animals lost control, the "Lord of the Flies" buzzing, the heat indoors. After school, instead of staying outside to play, I followed my dread home and cornered my mother in our dining room. I asked her about my upcoming class performance. Would Dad be in town for it? What about Bob? Would he be home from college yet? And what about Tom?

she said. "It's between him and Dad and has nothing to do with you. I'm sure Tom's sorry he won't be here to see your play. Or maybe, who knows, he'll be back by Friday and he will see it."

"O.K."

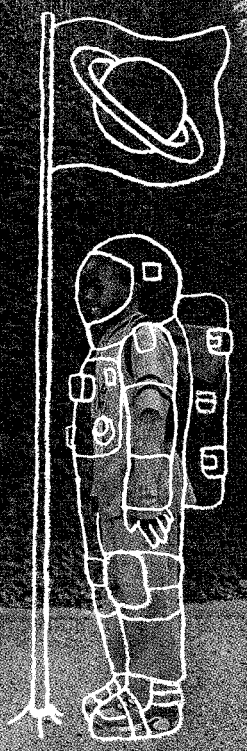
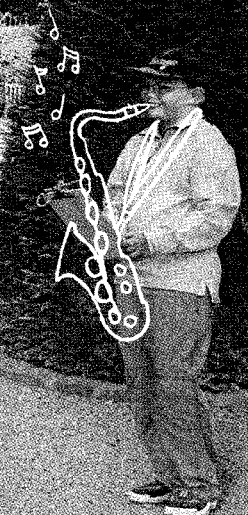
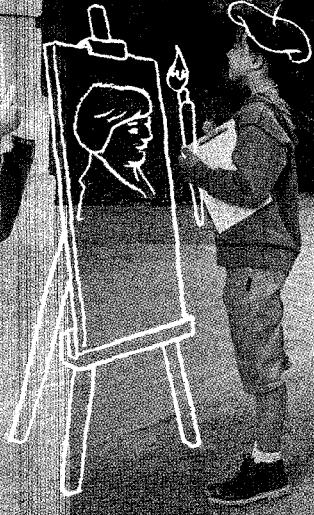
"But I don't want you telling anyone he's gone until we know where he is. Will you agree not to tell anyone?"

"O.K.," I said, breaking free of her. "Can we turn the air-conditioning on?"

I was unaware of it, but an epidemic had broken out across the country. Late adolescents in suburbs like ours had suddenly gone berserk, running away to other cities to have sex and not attend college, ingesting every substance they could get their hands on, not just clashing with their parents but rejecting and

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annihilating everything about them. For a while, the parents were so frightened and so mystified and so ashamed that each family, especially mine, quarantined itself and suffered in isolation.

When I went upstairs, my bedroom felt like an overwarm sickroom. The clearest remaining vestige of Tom was the "Don't Look Back" poster that he'd taped to a flank of his dresser where Bob Dylan's psychedelic hair style wouldn't always be catching my mother's censorious eye. Tom's bed, neatly made, was the bed of a kid carried off by an epidemic.

In that unsettled season, as the so-called generation gap was rending the cultural landscape, Charles Schulz's work was almost uniquely beloved. Fifty-five million Americans had seen "A Charlie Brown Christmas" the previous December, for a Nielsen share of better than fifty per cent. The musical "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown" was in its second sold-out year on Broadway. The astronauts of Apollo X, in their dress rehearsal for the first lunar landing, had christened their orbiter and landing vehicle Charlie Brown and Snoopy. Newspapers carrying "Peanuts" reached more than a hundred and fifty million readers, "Peanuts" collections were all over the best-seller lists, and if my own friends were any indication there was hardly a kid's bedroom in America without a "Peanuts" wastebasket or "Peanuts" bedsheets or a "Peanuts" gift book. Schulz, by a luxurious margin, was the most famous living artist on the planet.

To the countercultural mind, a be-goggled beagle piloting a doghouse and getting shot down by the Red Baron was akin to Yossarian paddling a dinghy to Sweden. The strip's square panels were the only square thing about it.

Wouldn't the country be better off listening to Linus Van Pelt than Robert McNamara? This was the era of flower children, not flower adults. But the strip appealed to older Americans as well. It was unfailingly inoffensive (Snoopy never lifted a leg) and was set in a safe, attractive suburb where the kids, except for Pigpen, whose image Ron McKer-

store bargains, she found just endlessly amusing.

I didn't buy comic books, or even *Mad* magazine, but I worshipped at the altars of Warner Bros. cartoons and the funnies section of the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*. I read the section's black-and-white page first, skipping the dramatic features like "Steve Roper" and "Juliet Jones" and glancing at "Li'l Abner" only to satisfy myself that it was still trashy and repellent. On the full-color back page I read the strips strictly in reverse order of preference, doing my best to be amused by Dagwood Bumstead's midnight snacks and struggling to ignore the fact that Tiger and Punkinhead were the kind of messy, unreflective kids I disliked in real life, before treating myself to my favorite strip, "B.C." The strip, by Johnny Hart, was caveman humor. Hart wrung hundreds of gags from the friendship between a flightless bird and a long-suffering tortoise who was constantly attempting untutored feats of agility and flexibility. Debts were always paid in clams; dinner was always roast leg of something. When I was done with "B.C.," I was done with the paper.

The comics in St. Louis's other paper, the

Globe-Democrat, which my parents didn't take, seemed bleak and foreign to me. "Broom Hilda" and "Animal Crackers" and "The Family Circus" were off-putting in the manner of the kid whose partially visible underpants, which had the name CUTTAIR hand-marked on the waistband, I'd stared at throughout my family's tour of the Canadian parliament. Although "The Family Circus" was resolutely unfunny, its panels clearly were based on some actual family's life and were aimed at an audience that recognized this life, which compelled me to posit an entire subspecies of human-



nan of the Grateful Dead pointedly embraced, were clean and well spoken and conservatively dressed. Hippies and astronauts, the Pentagon and the anti-war movement, the rejecting kids and the rejected grownups were all of one mind here.

An exception was my own household. As far as I know, my father never in his life read a comic strip, and my mother's interest in the funnies was limited to a single-panel feature called "The Girls," whose generic middle-aged matrons, with their weight problems and stinginess and poor driving skills and weakness for department-



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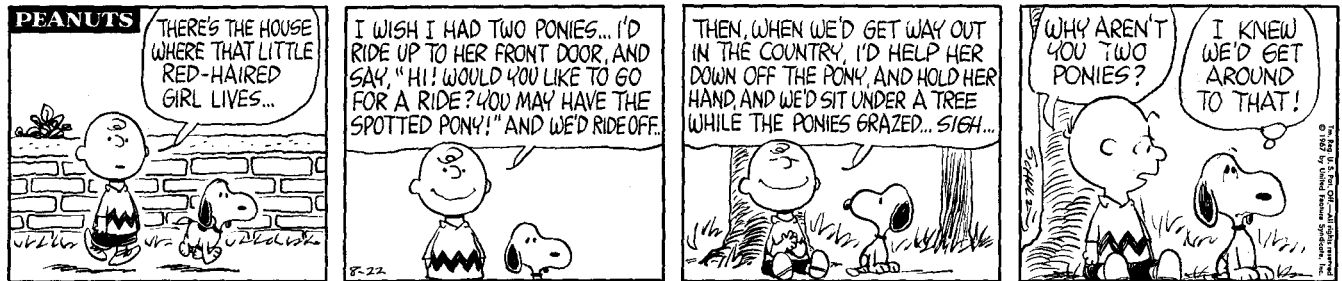
ity that found "The Family Circus" hilarious.

I knew very well, of course, why the *Globe-Democrat's* funnies were so lame: the paper that carried "Peanuts" didn't need any other good strips. Indeed, I would have swapped the entire *Post-Dispatch* for a daily dose of Schulz. Only "Peanuts," the strip we didn't get,

and "Peanuts Classics." A well-meaning relative once also gave me a copy of Robert Short's national best-seller, "The Gospel According to Peanuts," but it couldn't have interested me less. "Peanuts" wasn't a portal to the Gospel. It was my gospel.

Chapter 1, verses 1-4, of what I knew about disillusionment: Charlie

many of the more elaborate sequences, especially the ones about Charlie Brown's humiliation and loneliness, made only a generic impression on me. In a classroom spelling bee that Charlie Brown has been looking forward to, the first word he's asked to spell is "maze." With a complacent smile, he produces "M-A-Y-S." The



dealt with stuff that really mattered. I didn't for a minute believe that the children in "Peanuts" were really children—they were so much more emphatic and cartoonishly *real* than anybody in my own neighborhood—but I nevertheless took their stories to be dispatches from a universe of childhood that was somehow more substantial and convincing than my own. Instead of playing kickball and foursquare, the way my friends and I did, the kids in "Peanuts" had real baseball teams, real football equipment, real fistfights. Their interactions with Snoopy were far richer than the chasings and bitings that constituted my own relationships with neighborhood dogs. Minor but incredible disasters, often involving new vocabulary words, befell them daily. Lucy was "blackballed from the Bluebirds." She knocked Charlie Brown's croquet ball so far that he had to call the other players from a phone booth. She gave Charlie Brown a signed document in which she swore not to pull the football away when he tried to kick it, but the "peculiar thing about this document," as she observed in the final frame, was that "it was never notarized." When Lucy smashed the bust of Beethoven on Schroeder's toy piano, it struck me as odd and funny that Schroeder had a closet full of identical replacement busts, but I accepted it as humanly possible, because Schulz had drawn it.

To the "Peanuts Treasury" I soon added two other equally strong hardcover collections, "Peanuts Revisited"

Brown passes the house of the Little Red-Haired Girl, the object of his eternal fruitless longing. He sits down with Snoopy and says, "I wish I had two ponies." He imagines offering one of the ponies to the Little Red-Haired Girl, riding out into the countryside with her, and sitting down with her beneath a tree. Suddenly, he's scowling at Snoopy and asking, "Why aren't you two ponies?" Snoopy, rolling his eyes, thinks, "I knew we'd get around to that."

Or Chapter 1, verses 26-32, of what I knew about the mysteries of etiquette: Linus is showing off his new wristwatch to everyone in the neighborhood. "New watch!" he says proudly to Snoopy, who, after a hesitation, licks it. Linus's hair stands on end. "YOU LICKED MY WATCH!" he cries. "It'll rust! It'll turn green! He's ruined it!" Snoopy is left looking mildly puzzled and thinking, "I thought it would have been impolite not to taste it."

Or Chapter 2, verses 6-12, of what I knew about fiction: Linus is annoying Lucy, wheedling and pleading with her to read him a story. To shut him up, she grabs a book, randomly opens it, and says, "A man was born, he lived and he died. The End!" She tosses the book aside, and Linus picks it up reverently. "What a fascinating account," he says. "It almost makes you wish you had known the fellow."

The perfect silliness of stuff like this, the koanlike inscrutability, entranced me even when I was ten. But

class screams with laughter. He returns to his seat and presses his face into his desktop, and when his teacher asks him what's wrong he yells at her and ends up in the principal's office. "Peanuts" was steeped in Schulz's awareness that for every winner in a competition there has to be a loser, if not twenty losers, or two thousand, but I personally enjoyed winning and couldn't see why so much fuss was made about the losers.

In the spring of 1970, Miss Niblack's class was studying homonyms to prepare for what she called the Homonym Spelldown. I did some desultory homonym drilling with my mother, rattling off "sleigh" for "slay" and "slough" for "slew" the way other kids roped softballs into center field. To me, the only halfway interesting question about the Spelldown was who was going to come in second. A new kid had joined our class that year, a shrimp black-haired striver, Chris Toczko, who had it in his head that he and I were academic rivals. I was a nice enough little boy as long as you didn't compete on my turf. Toczko was annoyingly unaware that I, not he, by natural right, was the best student in the class. On the day of the Spelldown, he actually taunted me. He said he'd done a lot of studying and he was going to beat me! I looked down at the little pest and did not know what to say. I evidently mattered a lot more to him than he did to me.

For the Spelldown, we all stood by the blackboard, Miss Niblack calling



THE ISLANDS UNPLUGGED

By Richard J. Pietschmann

While jangling casinos, trained dolphin shows, and made-in-China souvenirs aren't the ingredients of an island dream vacation for most done-that travelers, silky beaches and a translucent sea never seem to lose their appeal. The vacation islands of the Caribbean and the Atlantic are familiar stuff to many of us, and when we escape to our favorites what we're looking for may be solace, tranquility and a good book.

BEACHBOUND IN ANTIGUA

Some of the best cricket in the Caribbean is played at the Antigua Recreation Ground in the capital city of St. John's. There's original pottery to buy from Edric at Sea View Farm (taxi drivers know the place), and good fish and potent rum (not necessarily in that order) may be found at Papa Zouk, named for the local word for French Creole music. But what this largest of the English-speaking Leeward Islands does best is let you live the luxury beach life at a small inn. The seventy room, all-inclusive Galley Bay on the island's western coast faces a three-quarter-mile beach so private Greta Garbo once sunbathed nude on it. Today, guests can use a fitness center

overlooking the lagoon, but they seem to prefer working out with a rum punch at the TeePee Bar while hoping for a glimpse at an atmospheric green flash at sunset. Info: 800-345-0356; www.eliteislandresorts.com

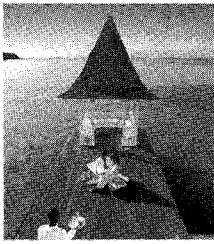
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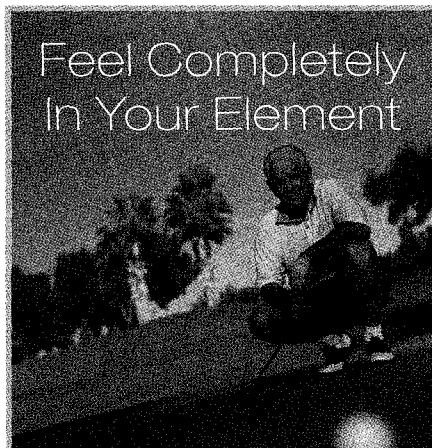


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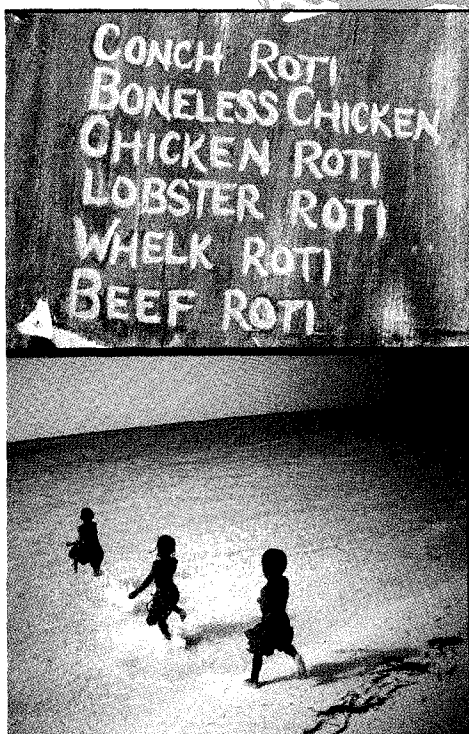
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The hundred and thirty-five acres of Palm Island, a five-beach private island retreat, are so remote the only way to get there is a ten-minute launch ride from Union Island—a hundred miles southwest of Barbados. The islet is home to just one hotel—the all-inclusive Palm Island Resort, rebuilt from the ground up in 1999.

In keeping with its Robinson Crusoe ambience, the hotel's thirty-seven rooms, including five island lofts on stilts and four plantation suites, come without the distraction of telephone or television. Info: 800-345-0356; www.eliteislandresorts.com

LOLLING IN TORTOLA

Hilly Tortola, the hub of the British Virgin Islands, may be a bit livelier than its little neighbors in that group of islands, but the quiet way of life is no more high-rise or hurried. Pusser's Rum is one of the island's attractions, but beware that it is made in three strengths: Numbers 2, 3, and 4.

Long Bay Beach Resort & Villas has ninety rooms and twenty-six villas of varying sizes and designs along a mile-long stretch of beach on the island's sandy north shore. Dining options this season include 1748, a new restaurant serving Caribbean specialties such as Cajun smoked crayfish. Daily dives are available, and complimentary access to a spa, health club, and tennis courts add to the resort's crucial option of daydreaming in a hammock. Info: 800-345-0356; www.eliteislandresorts.com

SIGHING IN ST. LUCIA

In June, the natural beauty that is the hallmark of this mountainous, 238-square-mile member of the Windward Islands of the West Indies' Lesser Antilles was officially recognized when UNESCO named St. Lucia's Pitons Management Area a World Heritage Site, which extends over eleven square miles. It includes the island's signature half-mile-high volcanic cones of Gros and Petit Piton, so important in the writings of St. Lucian Derek Walcott who was awarded the 1992 Nobel Prize in

Literature. The island's creative bent extends to music, with the St. Lucia Jazz festival set for April 29–May 8.

Architect Nick Troubetzkoy has made certain that his art-filled Anse Chastanet Resort takes full advantage of St. Lucia's exotic visual appeal. The six-hundred-acre former colonial plantation north of Soufrière has the Pitons for a backdrop and a quarter-mile namesake cove beach. Scheduled in March to join the resort's forty-nine hillside and beach-side accommodations are two dozen new suites, each with its own infinity swimming pool. Meanwhile, the new Jungle Spa beckons with indolent

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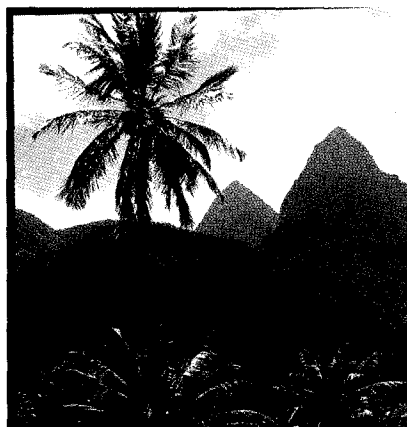
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LEFT: COURTESY OF THE BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS TOURISM BOARD. BELOW: © ANSE CHASTANET RESORT

Elbow Beach opened in July, while the Seahorse Grill's "new Bermudian" cuisine (shark hash summer rolls) may be raising gastronomes' eyebrows. Info: 800-223-7434; www.mandarinoriental.com

CULTURED IN CURAÇAO

This desert island of layered history, distinctive culture, and arresting centuries-old architecture isn't your usual Caribbean outpost. Punda, the historic center of the capital, Willemstad, is a rich and colorful time capsule of gabled Dutch colonial structures that is on UNESCO's World Heritage list. The terrace at Gouveneur is a good perch from which to sip a refreshing *awa di la munchi* (frozen lemonade), while viewing the old town's vibrant façades and waiting for the Queen Emma pontoon pedestrian bridge to swing aside and let ships pass into the inner harbor. The shops here are known as some of the finest of all the islands', and worth a look among these is Bamali, described by one frequent visitor as the "Escada of the Caribbean."

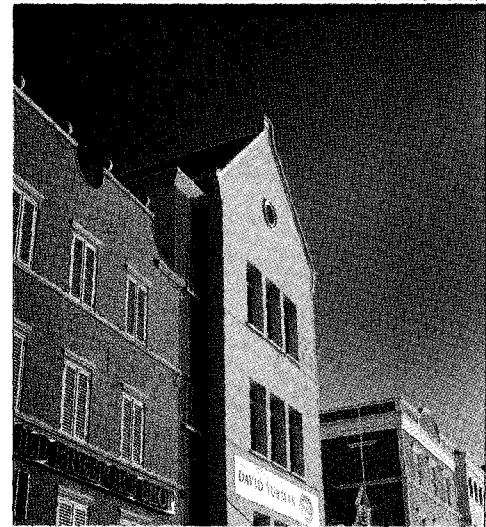
A cultural highlight of a visit to Curaçao is Jopi Hart's two-hour walking tour of far less photographed Otrabanda, the other half of Willemstad, across the bridge. Hart conducts his tour Wednesdays beginning at the clock at Brionplein, Otrabanda's main square, and concluding with a visit to the Kura Hulanda Museum and its displays chronicling the slave trade throughout the Caribbean. (Cost is approximately \$7.50). Info: 800-328-7222; www.curaçao-tourism.com

JAZZED IN JAMAICA

On Jamaica, where music is everywhere, Bob Marley's birthday (February 6) is an unofficial holiday, and the reggae great's house and recording studio at 56 Hope Road in Kingston is now the Bob Marley Museum. The Ocho Rios Jazz Festival will be held in June, and in July the Reggae Sumfest, the biggest reggae blowout of the year, will be held in Montego Bay's Catherine Hall.

ON THE GRAND HORIZON

The easy access Cayman Islands are well-known for being a paradisiacal playground. And The Ritz-Carlton, Grand Cayman debuts next spring with a 20,000-square-foot La Prairie Spa (the first in the Caribbean), two restaurants by award-winning Chef Eric Ripert of Le Bernardin, a Greg Norman-designed golf course, a Nick Bollettieri tennis academy, and a Jean-Michel Cousteau environmental program for kids. Info: 800-241-3333; www.ritzcarlton.com



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SUNDOWNER FAVORITES

ANTIGUA

Local Cavalier rum in a *Planter's Punch* served at the TeePee Bar at Galley Bay

BEQUIA

Hairoun ginger ale and the local Sunset Gold Rum plus passion fruit juice in a *Passionata* at the Gingerbread Bar & Restaurant

BERMUDA

Black Seal rum topped off with ginger beer in a *Dark 'n Stormy*, at Elbow Beach's Mickey's Beach Bistro & Bar

CURAÇAO

Senior Curaçao Red liqueur, white rum, red wine, peach liqueur, and kiwi syrup are included in a *Tropical Rainbow* at Hook's Hut

JAMAICA

Wray & Nephew White Overproof Rum in *Desmond's Rum Punch*, concocted by the namesake bartender at Strawberry Hill

PUNTA CANA

An *El Presidente* beer from La Choza on Punta Cana Beach, where singer Paulina Rubio's "Sexual Lover" music video was shot

ST. LUCIA

Anse Chastanet's intriguing *Stairway to Heaven* is a rum punch with Bois Bande, an herbal remedy made from tree bark, said to increase libido

TORTOLA

A *Pusser's Painkiller* (Pusser's rum, pineapple and orange juices, and coconut cream) at Pusser's West End

(Visit www.reggaesumfest.com and www.ochorios-jazz.com for '05 fest dates). International Reggae Day will be celebrated July 1st in Kingston, and another premier music event in Rose Hall, Montego Bay tops the year off—the Air Jamaica Jazz and Blues Festival will be presented January 24–29. Info: 800-233-4582; www.visitjamaica.com.

Colonial-style Half Moon, Montego Bay, celebrated its fiftieth anniversary last month. Named for its crescent-shaped beach, this venerable retreat for the royal and the famous has an equestrian center, thirteen tennis and four squash courts, all lit for night-time play, and fifty-four swimming

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pools (many of them private). Half Moon rebuilt its sixty-eight Hibiscus beachfront rooms and suites last December. Each now has a balcony or patio, oversized bathrooms, four-poster beds, and plantation-style décor. Info: 877-HALFMOON; www.halfmoon.com.jm

At the seventy-seven-suite Royal Plantation Ocho Rios, Jamaica, guests awake to the call of peacocks, and play at the neighboring Upton Golf & Country Club is free with the all-inclusive plan. Spooning out Iranian caviar and pouring Veuve Clicquot champagne is the new C Bar, said to be the Caribbean's first caviar-and-champagne bar. In August, the resort was selected as the first Jamaican hotel to become a member of Leading Small Hotels of the World. Info: 888-487-6925; www.royalplantation.com

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This island is unlike any other. Go ahead and visit for the water and the sun. But make sure you explore a natural cave, river or waterfall in **Cockpit Country**. It's a wild and untouched region of incredible and spectacular flora and fauna. (Condé Nast Traveler, April 2004, "Active Caribbean/Places & Prices")

Hop on a bamboo raft and drift down a cool, quiet river near **Montego Bay** or **Port Antonio**. Kick back with a tree-fresh mango and let your guide regale you with stories about his country.

Take a hike or bike in the **Blue Mountains**. Home of the famous Jamaican coffee growers, it is a tropical jungle 7000 feet above Caribbean sea level. Visit a grower for fresh mountain coffee, visit the **Hollywell National Recreation Park** or the beautiful **Cinchona Botanical Garden**. (Condé Nast Traveler, January 2004, "Deals of the Month")

When you head north you have to spend a day at **Port Antonio's** 178-foot-deep **Blue Lagoon**, and watch the water colors change with the movement of the sun.

Wherever your journey takes you, make sure to keep your ears and eyes out for the incredible array of birds. Jamaica has 28 endemic species of colorful and melodious birds, and what appears to be a different hummingbird around every bend. (Condé Nast Traveler, April 2004, "Keep It Moving")

To learn more about the excitement and wonders of Jamaica, visit cnipromo.com/jamaica.

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JAMAICA

out one half of a pair of homonyms and my classmates sitting down as soon as they had failed. Toczko was pale and trembling, but he knew his homonyms. He was the last kid standing, besides me, when Miss Niblack called out the word "liar." Toczko trembled and essayed, "L... I..." And I could see that I had beaten him. I waited impatiently while, with considerable anguish, he extracted two more letters from his marrow: "E... R?"

"I'm sorry, Chris, that's not a word," Miss Niblack said.

With a sharp laugh of triumph, not even waiting for Toczko to sit down, I stepped forward and sang out, "L-Y-R-E! *Lyre*. It's a stringed instrument."

I hadn't really doubted that I would win, but Toczko had got to me with his taunting, and my blood was up. I was the last person in class to realize that Toczko was having a meltdown. His face turned red and he began to cry, insisting angrily that "liar" *was* a word, it *was* a word.

I didn't care if it was a word or not. I knew my rights. Toczko's tears disturbed and disappointed me, as I made quite clear by fetching the classroom dictionary and showing him that "liar" wasn't in it. This was how both Toczko and I ended up in the principal's office.

I'd never been sent down before. I was interested to learn that the principal, Mr. Barnett, had a Webster's International Unabridged in his office. Toczko, who barely outweighed the dictionary, used two hands to open it and to roll back the pages to the "L" words. I stood at his shoulder and saw where his tiny, trembling index finger was pointing: *liar, n., one that lies (as in ambush)*. Mr. Barnett immediately declared us co-winners of the Spell-down—a compromise that didn't seem quite fair to me, since I would surely have murdered Toczko if we'd gone another round. But his outburst had spooked me, and I decided it might

be O.K., for once, to let somebody else win.

A few months after the Homonym Spell-down, just after summer vacation started, Toczko ran out into Grant Road and was killed by a car. What little I knew then about the world's badness I knew mainly from a camping trip, some years earlier, when I'd dropped a frog into a campfire and watched it shrivel and roll down the flat side of a log. My memory of that shrivelling and rolling was *sui generis*, distinct from my other memories. It was like a nagging, sick-making atom of rebuke in me. I felt similarly rebuked now when my mother, who knew nothing of Toczko's rivalry with me, told me that he was dead. She was weep-

ing as she'd wept over Tom's disappearance some weeks earlier. She sat me down and made me write a letter of condolence to Toczko's mother. I was very much unaccustomed to considering the interior states of people other than myself, but it was impossible not to consider Mrs. Toczko's. Though I never met her, in the ensuing weeks I pictured her suffering so incessantly and vividly that I could almost see her: a tiny, trim, dark-haired woman who cried the way her son did.

"Everything I do makes me feel guilty," says Charlie Brown. He's at the beach, and he has just thrown a pebble into the water, and Linus has commented, "Nice going. . . . It took that stone four thousand years to get to shore, and now you've thrown it back."

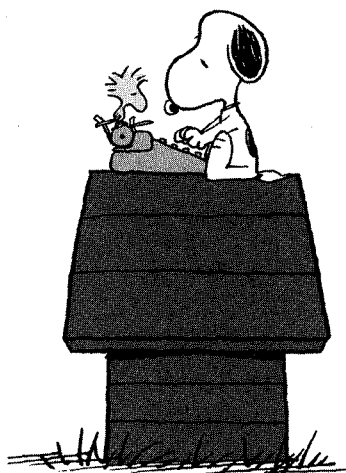
I felt guilty about Toczko. I felt guilty about the little frog. I felt guilty about shunning my mother's hugs when she seemed to need them most. I felt guilty about the washcloths at the bottom of the stack in the linen closet, the older, thinner washcloths that we seldom used. I felt guilty for preferring my best shooter marbles, a solid-red agate and a solid-yellow agate, my king and my queen, to marbles farther down my rigid marble hierarchy. I felt guilty about the

board games that I didn't like to play—Uncle Wiggily, U.S. Presidential Elections, Game of the States—and sometimes, when my friends weren't around, I opened the boxes and examined the pieces in the hope of making the games feel less forgotten. I felt guilty about neglecting the stiff-limbed, scratchy-pelted Mr. Bear, who had no voice and didn't mix well with my other stuffed animals. To avoid feeling guilty about them, too, I slept with one of them per night, according to a strict weekly schedule.

We laugh at dachshunds for humping our legs, but our own species is even more self-centered in its imaginings. There's no object so Other that it can't be anthropomorphized and shanghaied into conversation with us. Some objects are more amenable than others, however. The trouble with Mr. Bear was that he was more realistically bearlike than the other animals. He had a distinct, stern, feral persona; unlike our faceless washcloths, he was assertively Other. It was no wonder I couldn't speak through him. An old shoe is easier to invest with comic personality than is, say, a photograph of Cary Grant. The blanker the slate, the more easily we can fill it with our own image.

Our visual cortexes are wired to quickly recognize faces and then quickly subtract massive amounts of detail from them, zeroing in on their essential message: Is this person happy? Angry? Fearful? Individual faces may vary greatly, but a smirk on one is a lot like a smirk on another. Smirks are conceptual, not pictorial. Our brains are like cartoonists—and cartoonists are like our brains, simplifying and exaggerating, subordinating facial detail to abstract comic concepts.

Scott McCloud, in his cartoon treatise "Understanding Comics," argues that the image you have of yourself when you're conversing is very different from your image of the person you're conversing with. Your interlocutor may produce universal smiles and universal frowns, and they may help you to identify with him emotionally, but he also has a particular nose and particular skin and particular hair that continually remind you that he's an Other. The image you have of your own face, by contrast, is highly cartoonish. When you feel yourself smile, you imagine a cartoon



of smiling, not the complete skin-and-nose-and-hair package. It's precisely the simplicity and universality of cartoon faces, the absence of Otherly particulars, that invite us to love them as we love ourselves. The most widely loved (and profitable) faces in the modern world tend to be exceptionally basic and abstract cartoons: Mickey Mouse, the Simpsons, Tintin, and, simplest of all—barely more than a circle, two dots, and a horizontal line—Charlie Brown.

Schulz only ever wanted to be a cartoonist. He was born in St. Paul in 1922, the only child of a German father and a mother of Norwegian extraction. As an infant, he was nicknamed Sparky, after a horse in the then popular comic strip "Barney Google." His father, who, like Charlie Brown's father, was a barber, bought six different newspapers on the weekend and read all the era's comics with his son. Schulz skipped a grade in elementary school and was the least mature kid in every class after that. Much of the existing Schulzian literature dwells on the Charlie Brownish traumas in his early life: his skinniness and pimples, his

looking and I never had a date in high school, because I thought, who'd want to date me? So I didn't bother.

Schulz "didn't bother" going to art school, either—it would only have discouraged him, he said, to be around people who could draw better than he could. You could see a lack of confidence here. You could also see a kid who knew how to protect himself.

On the eve of Schulz's induction into the Army, his mother died of cancer. She was forty-eight and had suffered greatly, and Schulz later described the loss as an emotional catastrophe from which he almost did not recover. During basic training, he was depressed, withdrawn, and grieving. In the long run, though, the Army was good for him. He went into the service, he recalled later, as "a nothing person" and came out as a staff sergeant in charge of a machine-gun squadron. "I thought, By golly, if that isn't a man, I don't know what is," he said. "And I felt good about myself and that lasted about eight minutes, and then I went back to where I am now." After the war, Schulz returned to his childhood neighborhood, lived

school, after another student illustrated an essay with a watercolor drawing, Schulz was surprised when a teacher asked him why he hadn't done some illustrations himself. He didn't think it was fair to get academic credit for a talent that most kids didn't have. He never thought it was fair to draw caricatures. ("If somebody has a big nose," he said, "I'm sure that they regret the fact they have a big nose and who am I to point it out in gross caricature?") In later decades, when he had enormous bargaining power, he was reluctant to demand a larger or more flexible layout for "Peanuts," because he didn't think it was fair to the papers that had been his loyal customers. His resentment of the name "Peanuts," which his editors had given the strip in 1950, was still fresh in the eighties, when he was one of the ten highest-paid entertainers in America (behind Bill Cosby, ahead of Michael Jackson). "They didn't know when I walked in there that here was a fanatic," he told *NEMO*. "Here was a kid totally dedicated to what he was going to do. And to label then something that was going to be a life's work with a name



unpopularity with girls at school, the inexplicable rejection of a batch of his drawings by his high-school yearbook, and, some years later, the rejection of his marriage proposal by the real-life Little Red-Haired Girl, Donna Mae Johnson. Schulz himself spoke of his youth in a tone close to anger. "It took me a long time to become a human being," he told *NEMO* magazine in 1987.

I was regarded by many as kind of sissy-fied, which I resented because I really was not a sissy. I was not a tough guy, but . . . I was good at any sport where you threw things, or hit them, or caught them, or something like that. I hated things like swimming and tumbling and those kinds of things, so I was really not a sissy. [But] the coaches were so intolerant and there was no program for all of us. So I never regarded myself as being much and I never regarded myself as being good

with his father, became intensely involved in a Christian youth group, and learned to draw kids. For the rest of his life, he virtually never drew adults. He avoided adult vices—didn't drink, didn't smoke, didn't swear—and, in his work, he spent more and more time in the imagined yards and sandlots of his childhood. But the world of "Peanuts" remained a deeply motherless place. Charlie Brown's dog may (or may not) cheer him up after a day of failures; his mother never does.

Although Schulz had been a social victim as a child, he'd also had the undivided attention of two loving parents. All his life, he was a prickly Minnesotan mixture of disabling inhibition and rugged self-confidence. In high

like 'Peanuts' was really insulting." To the suggestion that thirty-seven years might have softened the insult, Schulz said, "No, no. I hold a grudge, boy."

I never heard my father tell a joke. Sometimes he reminisced about a business colleague who ordered a "Scotch and Coke" and a "flander" fillet in a Dallas diner in July, and he could smile at his own embarrassments, his impolitic remarks at the office and his foolish mistakes on home-improvement projects, but there wasn't a silly bone in his body. He responded to other people's jokes with a wince or a grimace. As a boy, I told him a story I'd made up about a trash-hauling company cited for "fragrant violations." He shook his head,

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stone-faced, and said, "Not plausible."

In another archetypal "Peanuts" strip, Violet and Patty are abusing Charlie Brown in vicious stereo: "GO ON HOME! WE DON'T WANT YOU AROUND HERE!" As he trudges away with his eyes on the ground, Violet remarks, "It's a strange thing about Charlie Brown. You almost never see him laugh."

My father only ever wanted not to be a child anymore. His parents were a pair of nineteenth-century Scandinavians caught up in a Hobbesian struggle to prevail in the swamps of north-central Minnesota. His popular, charismatic older brother drowned in a hunting accident when he was still a young man. His nutty and pretty and spoiled younger sister had an only daughter who died in a one-car accident when she was twenty-two. My father's parents also died in a one-car accident, but only after regaling him with prohibitions, demands, and criticisms for fifty years. He never said a harsh word about them. He never said a nice word, either.

The few childhood stories he told were about his dog, Spider, and his gang of friends in the invitingly named little town, Palisade, that his father and uncles had constructed among the swamps. The local high school was eight miles from Palisade. To attend, my father lived in a boarding house for a year and later commuted in his father's Model A. He was a social cipher, invisible after school. The most popular girl in his class, Romelle Erickson, was expected to be the valedictorian, and the school's "social crowd" was "shocked," my father told me many times, when it turned out that "the country boy," "Earl Who," had claimed the title.

When he registered at the University of Minnesota, in 1933, his father went

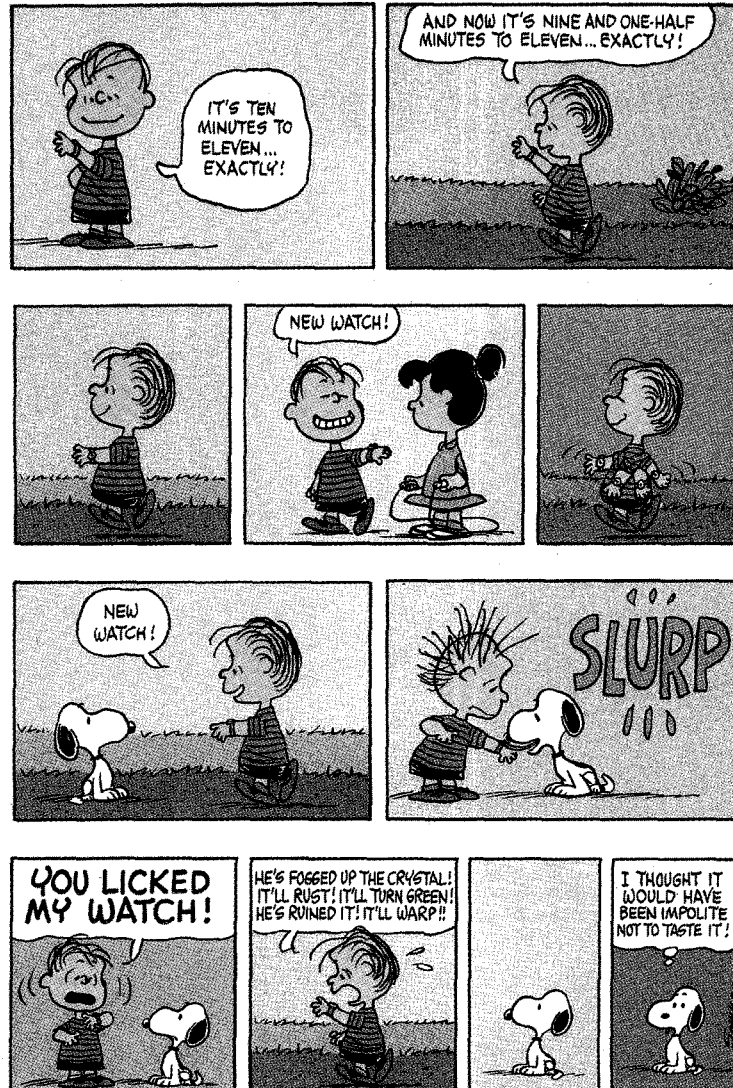
with him and announced, at the head of the registration line, "He's going to be a civil engineer." For the rest of his life, my father was restless. He was studying philosophy at night school when he met my mother, and it took her four years to persuade him to have children. In his thirties, he agonized about whether to study medicine; in his forties, he was

A different doctor, whose office was at the top of five long flights of stairs, greeted him with a blood-pressure test and immediately declared him unfit to fight the Nazis. Or so my father told me, with a shrugging gesture and an odd smile (as if to say, "What could I do?"), when I asked him why he hadn't been in the war. Even as a teen-ager, I sensed that his social awkwardness and sensitivities had been aggravated by not serving. He came from a family of pacifist Swedes, however, and was very happy not to be a soldier. He was happy that my brothers had college deferments and good luck with the lottery. Among his patriotic colleagues and the war-vet husbands of my mother's friends, he was such an outlier on the subject of Vietnam that he didn't dare talk about it. At home, in private, he aggressively declared that, if Tom had drawn a bad number, he personally would have driven him to Canada.

Tom was a second son in the mold of my father. He got poison ivy so bad it was like measles. He had a mid-October birthday and was perennially the youngest kid in his classes. On his only date in high school, he was so nervous that he forgot his baseball tickets and left the car idling in the street while he ran back inside;

the car rolled down the hill, punched through an asphalt curb, and cleared two levels of a terraced garden before coming to rest on a neighbor's front lawn.

To me, it simply added to Tom's mystique that the car was not only still drivable but entirely undamaged. Neither he nor Bob could do any wrong in my eyes. They were expert whistlers and chess players, phenomenal wielders of tools and pencils, sole suppliers of whatever anecdotes and cultural data I was able to impress my friends with. In the margins of Tom's school copy of "A Portrait of



offered a partnership in a contracting firm which he almost dared to accept; in his fifties and sixties, he admonished me not to waste my life working for a corporation. In the end, though, he spent fifty years doing exactly what his father had told him to do.

My mother called him "oversensitive." She meant that it was easy to hurt his feelings, but the sensitivity was physical as well. When he was young, a doctor gave him a pinprick test that showed him to be allergic to "almost everything," including wheat, milk, and tomatoes.



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the Artist," he drew a two-hundred-page raffle-animation of a stick-figure pole-vaulter clearing a hurdle, landing on his head, and being carted away on a stretcher by stick-figure E.M.S. personnel; this seemed to me a masterwork of filmic art and science. But my father had told Tom: "You'd make a good architect, here are three schools to choose from." He said: "You're going to work for Sverdrup."

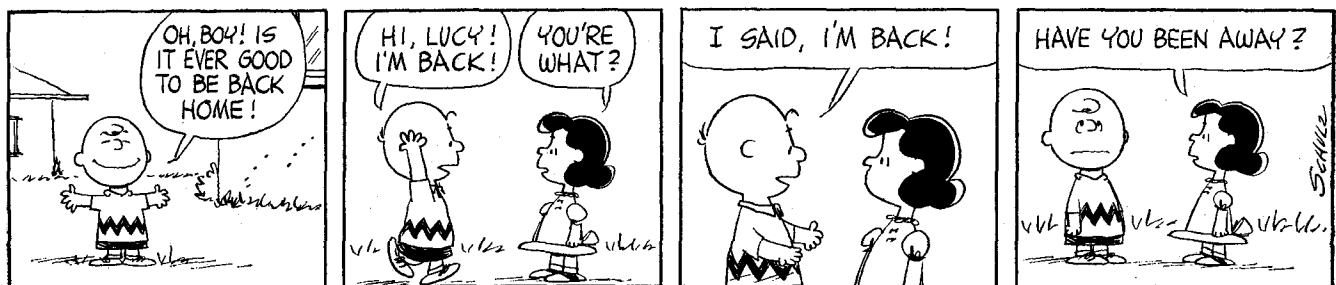
Tom was gone for five days before we heard from him. His call came on a Sunday after church. We were sitting on the screen porch, and my mother ran the length of the house to answer the phone. She sounded so ecstatic with relief I felt embarrassed for her. Tom had hitchhiked back to Houston and was doing

icature that much of Segar's expressive budget was spent on nondiscretionary items, like Popeye's distended jaw and oversized nose; these were good jokes, but the same jokes every time. The very first "Peanuts" strip, by contrast, was all white space and big funny faces. It invited you right in. The minor character Shermy was speaking in neat letters and clear diction: "Here comes ol' Charlie Brown! Good ol' Charlie Brown... Yes, sir! Good ol' Charlie Brown... How I hate him!"

This first strip and the seven hundred and fifty-nine that immediately followed it have recently been published, complete and fully indexed, in a handsome volume from Fantagraphics Books. (This is the first in a series of twenty-

Mike Doonesbury, for example, can be translated into words with minimal loss of information. Garry Trudeau is essentially a social novelist, his topical satire and intricate family dynamics and elaborate camera angles all serving to divert attention from the monotony of his comic expression. But Linus Van Pelt consists, first and foremost, of pen strokes. You'll never really understand him without seeing his hair stand on end. Translation into words inevitably diminishes Linus. As a cartoon, he's already a perfectly efficient vector of comic intention.

The purpose of a comic strip, Schulz liked to say, was to sell newspapers and to make people laugh. Although the formulation may look self-deprecating



deep-fry at a Church's Fried Chicken, hoping to save enough money to join his best friend in Colorado. My mother kept asking him when he might come home, assuring him that he was welcome and that he wouldn't have to work at Sverdrup; but there was something toxic about us now which Tom obviously wanted nothing to do with.

Charles Schulz was the best comic-strip artist who ever lived. When "Peanuts" debuted, in October, 1950 (the same month Tom was born), the funny pages were full of musty holdovers from the thirties and forties. Even with the strip's strongest precursors, George Herriman's "Krazy Kat" and Elzie Segar's "Popeye," you were aware of the severe constraints under which newspaper comics operated. The faces of Herriman's characters were too small to display more than rudimentary emotion, and so the burden of humor and sympathy came to rest on Herriman's language; his work read more like comic fable than like funny drawing. Popeye's face was proportionately larger than Krazy Kat's, but he was such a florid car-

five uniform volumes that will reproduce Schulz's entire daily oeuvre.) Even in Schulz's relatively primitive early work, you can appreciate what a breakthrough he made in drawing characters with large, visually uncluttered heads. Long limbs and big landscapes and fully articulated facial features—adult life, in short—were unaffordable luxuries. By dispensing with them, and by jumping from a funnies world of five or ten facial expressions into a world of fifty or a hundred, Schulz introduced a new informational dimension to the newspaper strip.

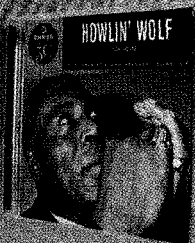
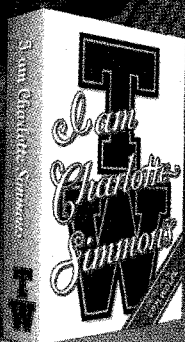
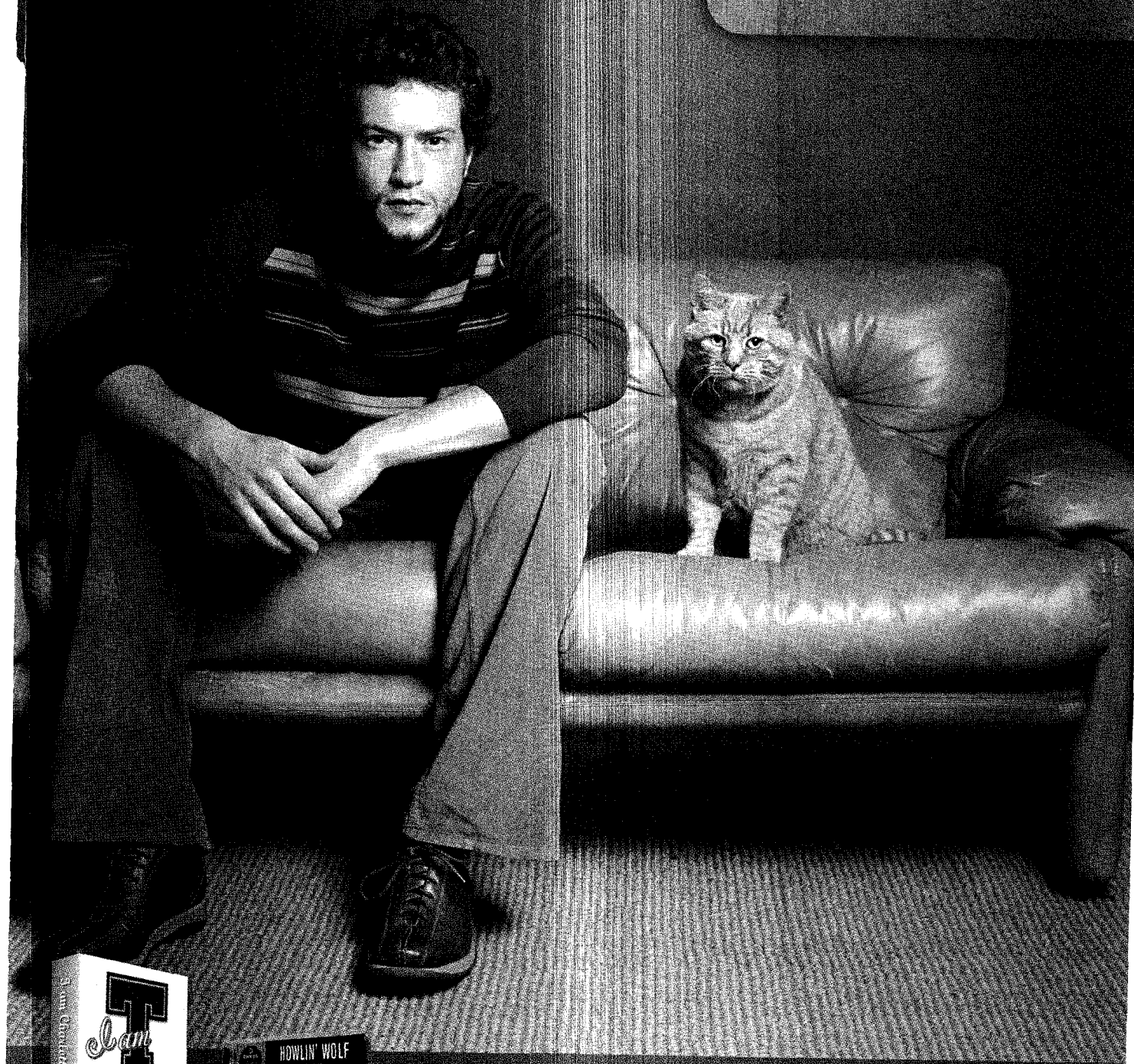
Although he later became famous for putting words like "depressed" and "inner tensions" and "emotional outlets" in the mouths of little kids, only a tiny percentage of his strips were actually drawn in the mock-psychological vein. His most important innovations were visual—he was all about *drawing funny*—and for most of my life as a fan I was curiously unconscious of this fact. In my imagination, "Peanuts" was a narrative, a collection of locales and scenes and sequences. And, certainly, some comic strips do fit this description.

at first glance, in fact it is an oath of loyalty. When I. B. Singer, in his Nobel address, declared that the novelist's first responsibility is to be a storyteller, he didn't say "mere storyteller," and Schulz didn't say "merely make people laugh." He was loyal to the reader who wanted something funny from the funny pages. Just about anything—protesting against world hunger; getting a laugh out of words like "nooky"; dispensing wisdom; dying—is easier than real comedy.

Schulz never stopped trying to be funny. Around 1970, though, he began to drift away from aggressive humor and into melancholy reverie. There came tedious meanderings in Snoopyland with the unhilarious bird Woodstock and the unamusing beagle Spike. Certain leaden devices, such as Marcie's insistence on calling Peppermint Patty "sir," were heavily recycled. By the late eighties, the strip had grown so quiet that younger friends of mine seemed baffled by my fandom. It didn't help that later "Peanuts" anthologies loyally reprinted so many Spike and Marcie strips. The volumes that prop-

Likes:
Tom Wolfe

Loves:
Howlin' Wolf

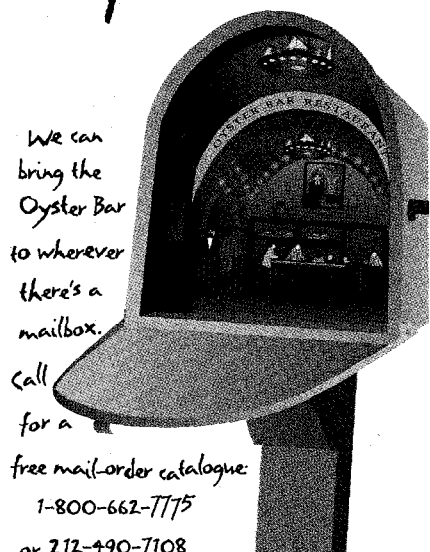


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erly showcased Schulz's genius, the three hardcover collections from the sixties, had gone out of print. There were a few critical appreciations, most notably by Umberto Eco, who argued for Schulz's literary greatness in an essay written in the sixties and reprinted in the eighties (when Eco got famous). But the praise of a "low" genre by an old semiotic soldier in the culture wars couldn't help carrying an odor of provocation.

Still more harmful to Schulz's reputation were his own kitschy spinoffs. Even in the sixties, you had to fight through cloying Warm Puppy paraphernalia to reach the comedy; the cuteness levels in latter-day "Peanuts" TV specials tied my toes in knots. What first made "Peanuts" "Peanuts" was cruelty and failure, and yet every "Peanuts" greeting card and tchotchke and blimp had to feature somebody's sweet, crumpled smile. (You should go out and buy the new Fantagraphics book just to reward the publisher for putting a scowling Charlie Brown on the cover.) Everything about the billion-dollar "Peanuts" industry, which Schulz himself helped create, argued against him as an artist to be taken seriously. Far more than Disney, whose studios were churning out kitsch from the start, Schulz came to seem an icon of art's corruption by commerce, which sooner or later paints a smiling sales face on everything it touches. The fan who wants to see an artist sees a merchant instead. Why isn't he two ponies?

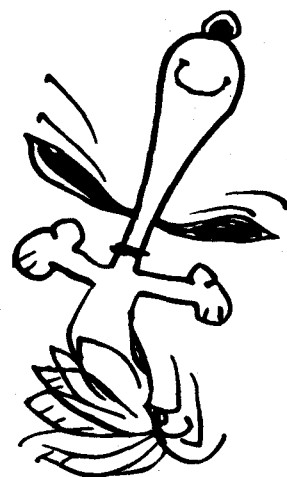
It's hard to repudiate a comic strip, however, when your memories of it are more vivid than your memories of your own life. When Charlie Brown went off to summer camp, I went along in my imagination. I heard him trying to make conversation with the fellow-camper who sat on his bunk and refused to say anything but "Shut up and leave me alone." I watched when he finally came home again and shouted to Lucy "I'm back!" and Lucy gave him a bored look and said, "Have you been away?"

I went to camp myself, in the summer of 1970. But, aside from an alarming personal-hygiene situation that seemed to have resulted from my peeing in some poison ivy, and which, for several days, I

was convinced was either a fatal tumor or puberty, my camp experience paled beside Charlie Brown's. The best part of it was coming home and seeing Bob's new yellow Karmann Ghia waiting for me at the Y.M.C.A.

Tom was also home by then. He'd managed to make his way to his friend's house in Colorado, but the friend's parents weren't happy about harboring somebody else's runaway son, and so they'd sent Tom back to St. Louis. Officially, I was very excited that he was back. In truth, I was embarrassed to be around him. I was afraid that if I referred to his sickness and our quarantine I might trigger a relapse. I wanted to live in a "Peanuts" world where rage was funny and insecurity was lovable. The littlest kid in my "Peanuts" books, Sally Brown, grew older for a while and then hit a glass ceiling. I wanted everyone in my family to get along and nothing to change; but suddenly, after Tom ran away, it was as if the five of us looked around, asked why we should be spending time together, and failed to come up with many good answers.

For the first time, in the months that followed, my parents' conflicts became audible. My father came home on cool nights to complain about the house's "chill." My mother countered that the house wasn't cold if you were *doing housework all day*. My father marched into the dining room to adjust the thermostat and dramatically point to its "Comfort Zone," a pale-blue arc between 72 and 78 degrees. My mother said that she was *so hot*. And I decided, as always, not to voice my suspicion that the Comfort Zone referred to air-conditioning in the summer rather than



heat in the winter. My father set the temperature at seventy-two and re-treated to the den, which was situated directly above the furnace. There was a lull, and then big explosions. No matter what corner of the house I hid myself in, I could hear my father bellowing, "LEAVE THE GOD-DAMNED THERMOSTAT ALONE!"

"Earl, I didn't touch it!"

"You did! Again!"

"I didn't think I even moved it, I just looked at it, I didn't mean to change it."

"Again! You monkeyed with it again! I had it set where I wanted it. And you moved it down to seventy!"

"Well, if I did somehow change it, I'm sure I didn't mean to. You'd be hot, too, if you worked all day in the kitchen."

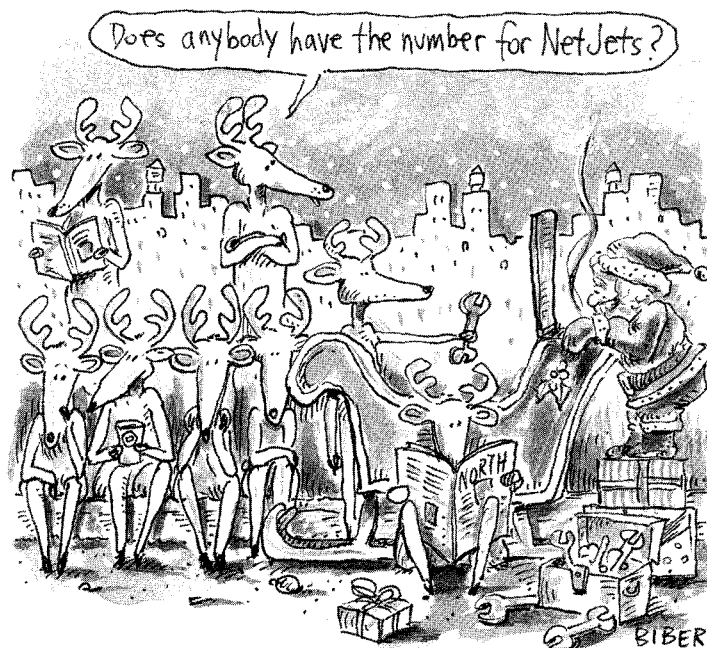
"All I ask at the end of a long day at work is that the temperature be set in the Comfort Zone."

"Earl, it is so hot in the kitchen. You don't know, because you're never in here, but it is so hot."

"The low end of the Comfort Zone! Not even the middle! The low end! It is not too much to ask!"

I wonder why "cartoonish" remains such a pejorative. It took me half my life to achieve seeing my parents as cartoons. And to become more perfectly a cartoon myself: what a victory that would be.

My father eventually applied technology to the problem of temperature. He bought a space heater to put behind his chair in the dining room, where he was bothered in winter by drafts from the bay window. Like so many of his appliance purchases, the heater was a pathetically cheap little thing, a wattage hog with a stertorous fan and a grinning orange mouth which dimmed the lights and drowned out conversation and produced a burning smell every time it cycled on. When I was in high school, he bought a quieter, more expensive model. One evening, my mother and I started reminiscing about the old model, caricaturing my father's temperature sensitivities, doing cartoons of the little heater's faults, the smoke and the buzzing, and my father got mad and left the table. He thought we were ganging up on him. He thought I was being cruel, and I was, but I was also forgiving him. ♦



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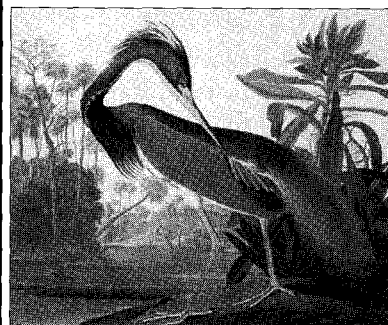
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ON THE BORDER

FINE DISTURBANCES

To track someone, you have to learn to see.

BY JEFF TIETZ

United States Border Patrol operations above the Texas stretch of the Rio Grande often begin with a single tracker on foot, staring at the earth. In the Border Patrol, tracking is called cutting sign. "Cutting" is looking; "sign" is evidence. No technology is involved. Trackers look for tread designs printed in the soil and any incidental turbulence from a footfall or moving body. They notice the scuff insignia of milling hesitation at a fence and the sudden absence of spiderwebs between mesquite branches and the lugubrious residue of leaked moisture at the base of broken cactus spines. (The dry time is a stopwatch.) The best trackers know whether scatterings of limestone pebbles have come off human feet or deer hooves. They particularly value shininess—a foot compresses the earth in one direction, which makes it shine, and wind quickly unsettles this uniformity, so high-shining groups are irresistible.

Low-light cameras and night-vision goggles and thermal-imaging scopes and seismic sensors are useful along the river, but in the brushland north of it pretty much the only thing to do is follow illegal immigrants on foot. Nearly every southern Border Patrol station maintains a network of footprint traps called drags—twelve-foot-wide swaths of dirt that are combed every day with bolted-together tractor tires ball-hitched to the back of an S.U.V. Agents monitor drags endlessly and follow foreign prints into the brush.

One morning just after dawn, I was out with an agent named Mike McCarson. He was driving a customized Ford F-250 down a ranch road, cutting a drag that ran alongside it. The Rio Grande was close; the sky was unusually congested. The drag and the ranch road extended out of sight through mesquite and prickly-pear cactus and purple sage and huisache and whitethorn, all semi-aridly dwarfish: the horizon was visible everywhere. Driving about eight m.p.h., McCarson leaned out the window a bit,

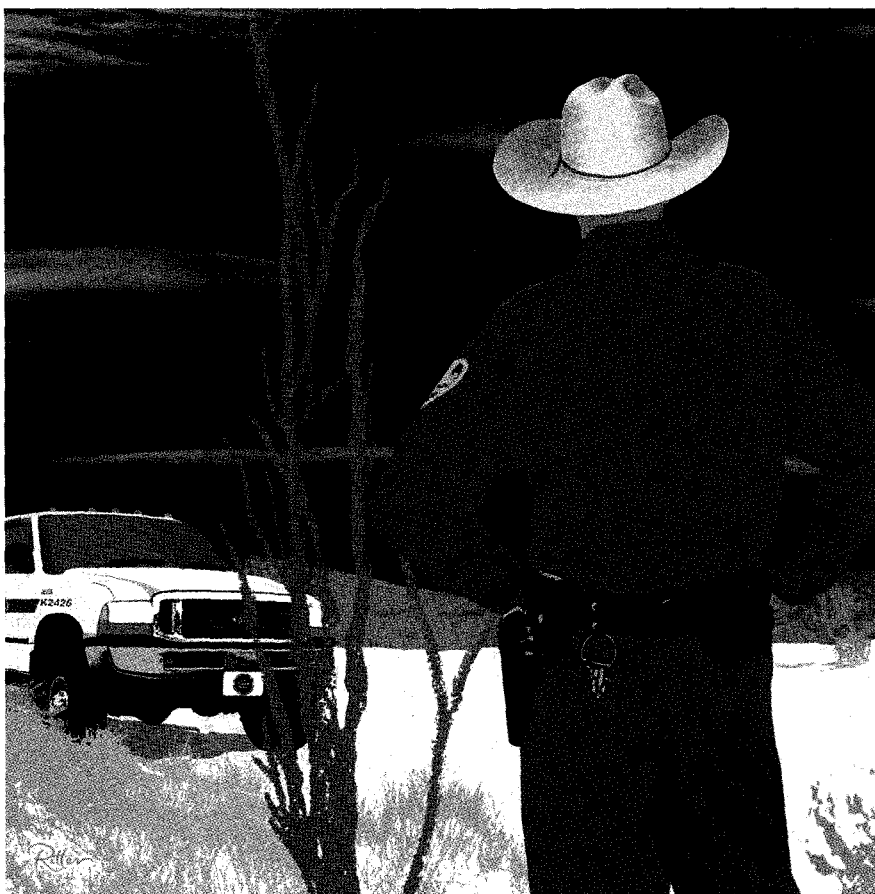
his hinged sideview mirror folded flush with the door.

McCarson is forty-three; he has been tracking illegal immigrants for eighteen years. He works out of the Border Patrol's Brackettville station, which is about twenty miles northeast of the Rio Grande and thirty miles east of the town of Del Rio. Brackettville's hundred and twenty

ettville's agents rarely detain people unless they've been caught more than fifteen times. On any given trip, an illegal immigrant's odds of eluding Brackettville's defenses are extremely good. Immigrants can angle in from anywhere along a fifty-mile stretch of the Rio Grande, and overpowering numbers of people often cross the river simultaneously. Brackettville doesn't have the personnel to track more than five groups at once.

"It's just the luck of the draw which ones we chase," McCarson told me as we drove. "We generally don't even work groups as small as three, four people, or groups that happen to have crossed real early the night before."

I spent many days with McCarson, cutting drags and trails and meandering



"It's all just looking," Mike McCarson says. "If there's something there, we'll see it."

agents are responsible for a twenty-five-hundred-square-mile rectangle of mesquite flat and limestone breaks. No more than forty agents are ever in the field at once—one per ninety square miles.

Federal guidelines recommend that undocumented aliens be apprehended at least five times before they're charged with illegal entry and held for trial, but Brack-

through mesquite in the F-250. He is a big, sauntering, freewheelingly mouthy guy who says "tars" for "towers" and "BOO-coo" for "beaucoup," a word he uses a lot, sometimes as a noun ("There's boo-coos of trails through there"). McCarson instinctively registers the happenstance, ambient comedy of ordinary life, sometimes with a falsetto, arc-of-joy

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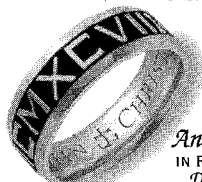
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cackle. He likes to stop for lunch on hill-sides and in old Seminole cemeteries, and he can be precipitately melodramatic. ("Now, the seasoned journeyman agent will see the totality of circumstances in his area and know precisely what's normal activity and what's not.") McCarson is married but doesn't have kids, which may partly explain his widely entrepreneurial imagination: he owns a scuba business on Lake Amistad; he's a partner in a San Angelo real-estate venture; he's a successful self-taught stock picker.

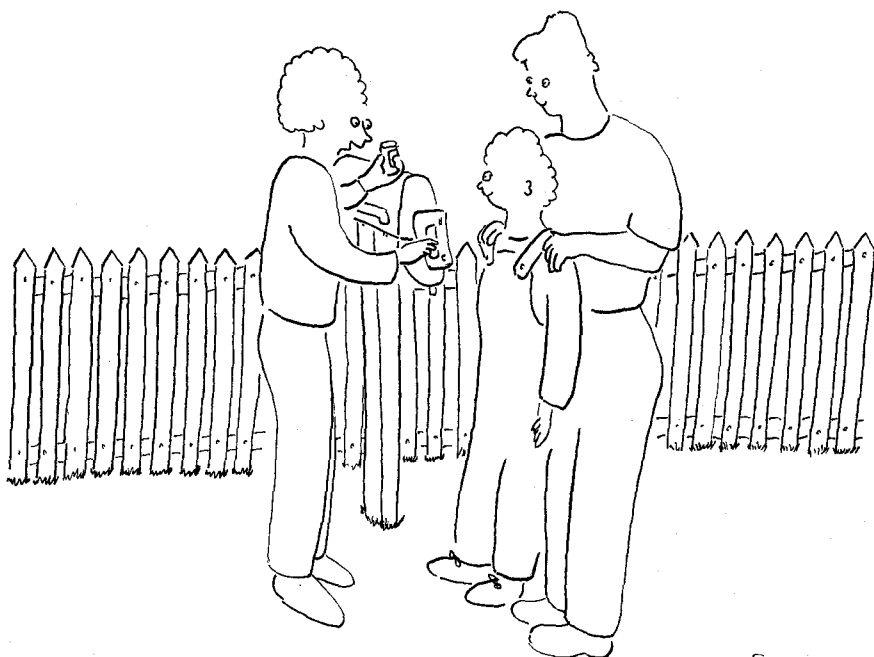
On the drag, we were seeing a lot of overlapping cloven-hoof sign, like combinations of the alphabet's last four letters. Agents have found sign of people crawling across drags on their hands and knees (long, chutelike impressions), and sign of people tiptoeing across drags (shoe-tip abbreviations), and sign of people walking across drags backward in socks (blunted images, kicked soil revealing the true direction of travel). Someone once walked across a drag on his hands (profound, torqued handprints); the man was followed from the drag to a railroad siding, where the prints transformed themselves into elongate gouges in the embankment stones: running hard, he'd jumped a freight. Sometimes, illegal immigrants will survey drags until they find a particularly rocky stretch and cross there, stepping only on stable rocks, as if they were fording a stream. If un-

yielding terrain frames the rocks, they leave almost no sign.

Ideally, a tracker will find fresh prints on a drag, follow them until he can establish a line of travel, and radio in the group's drag coordinates, its heading, and its tread profile. Then another agent will cut the group on a drag some miles north or northeast—all the sheltering towns and safe houses and freight tracks and pickup points lie that way—and either catch it or radio in a revised line, allowing a third agent to leap up to the group. In practice, it's often impossible to categorically identify a group, establish a line, or get a forward cut.

Because the surest way to identify a group is by its distinct assembly of tread patterns, trackers use a lexicon of soles: super chevron, racetrack, wishbone eight ball, propeller, Tetris, basket weave, Kmart special, rifle sights, Flintstones, hourglass, running W, matchstick. When I was out with McCarson, the radio regularly issued sole descriptions: a "diamond-within-a-diamond heel with an instep logo," an "island running W with a slash in the middle and a fine line," a "beetle pincer in the toe." The increasing complexity of sneaker-sole designs frequently creates neologisms. Regions, and sometimes stations, have their own dialects: a sole dominated by lugs in the shape of a Z is a "zebar" in Brackettville and a "zorro" in Del Rio.

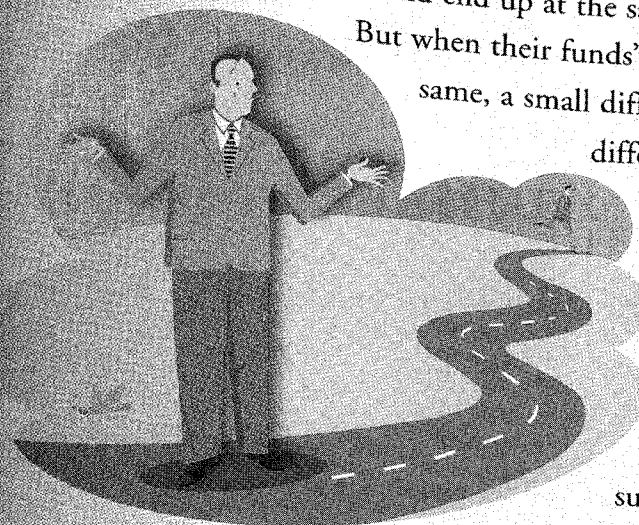
We cut a blank stretch for a while. "It's



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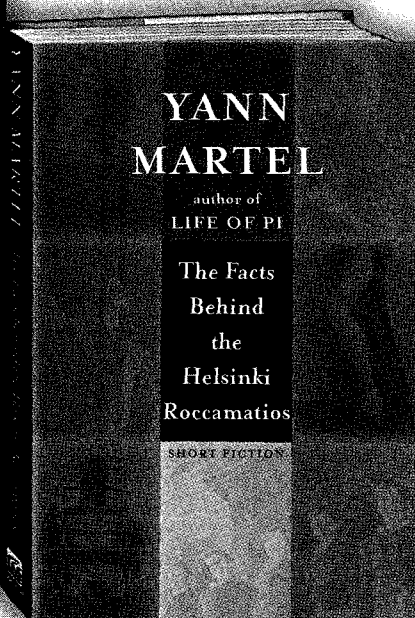
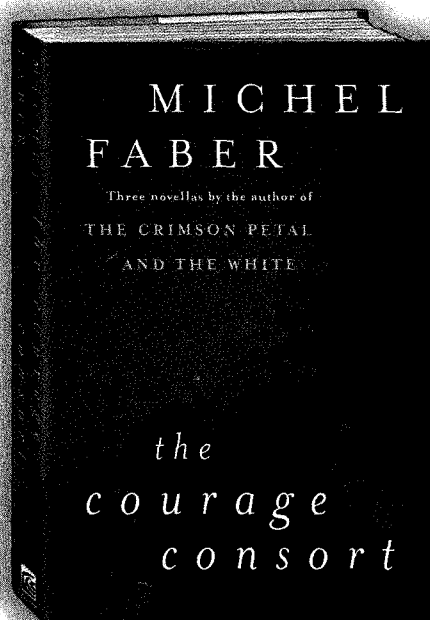
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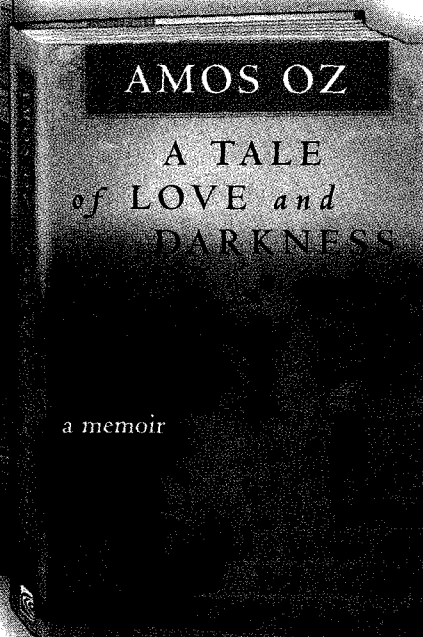
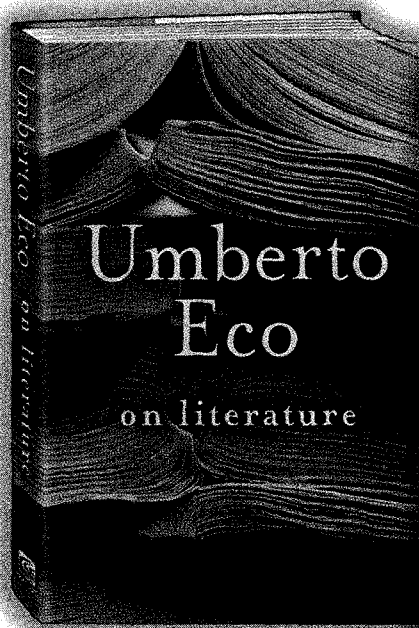
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gonna be a little quiet," McCarson said. "We haven't had much moon." The moon is a prime instrument of navigation, because it illuminates without stark exposure. (Illegal immigrants also use the sun, stars, and diverse landmarks.) A few minutes later, McCarson stopped the truck. "Well, we got some crossers," he said.

The prints were shallow and had been scrambled by superimposition; it took McCarson about thirty seconds to disentangle the tread designs and stride lengths and foot sizes. I couldn't find a discrete print. "Group of five," he said: running W, matchstick, heavy-lug boot, fine wire mesh, star-in-the-heel waffle. "They were here last night. They're fresh, but they're not smokin'-hot fresh. When the ground is retaining moisture like this, and you don't have much wind, the sign can hold its shape for a long time. But I see a little better color in our prints than in theirs." Foot pressure, concentrating moisture in the soil, darkens prints; the clock of evaporation steadily lightens them. I couldn't see any color difference. "They could be anytime last night," McCarson said. "And we've had the correct amount of moisture over the correct amount of time to make the ground about like concrete, so they're not leavin' much sign."

If drag prints aren't decisive, trackers examine a group's sign along the first stretch of trail, wary of the corrosive or stabilizing effects of weather and terrain—hilltop wind withers prints; damp arroyos embalm them—and noticing things like insect crossings and preservative soil composition and raindrop cratering. Every left-behind object is a potential timekeeper. There are rare, unambiguous tokens: jettisoned cans of beans that ants haven't yet noticed, sunlit Kleenex still clammy with mucus, fresh bread crusts on a hot, clear day. But most often agents encounter noncommittal objects—desiccated bread crusts in full sun which could be two or ten hours old.

Swinging the shepherd's cane he uses as a tracking aid, McCarson started cutting. Just beyond the drag was a strip of mesquite scrub, and then freight tracks on a high gravel embankment. In the scrub, the prints disappeared abruptly, as if the group had been chopped out. But McCarson read a carnival of sign through the scrub and followed a sequential displacement of gravel up the embankment. He pointed to a railroad

tie and kept going. Possessed by the live trail, he couldn't pause to explain.

I sat down and studied the tie. It looked like every other tie. I began shifting position relative to the obfuscated sun. Eventually, three stacked Ws of discoloration, collectively the size of a half-dollar, shimmied into view.

On the other side of the tracks, McCarson was standing in front of a fence, methodically locating the crossing point with his cane. Beyond the fence, the mesquite gave way to scrofulous pastureland. The wind picked up and a stop-start drizzle began. Any moderately heavy rain melts sign, toughens vegetation, and hardens the arid earth. McCarson walked along the edge of the scattershot grasses for a while, hesitant, and then accelerated.

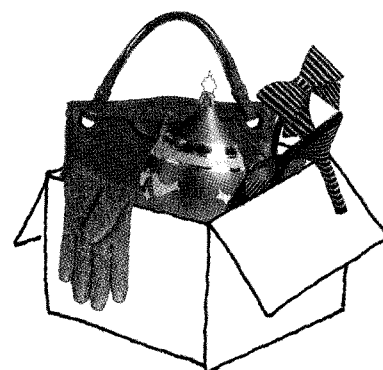
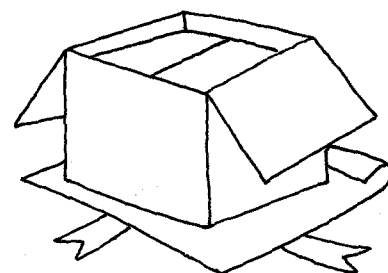
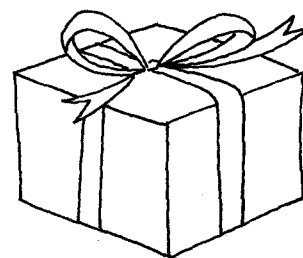
He was mainly scrutinizing stalks of buffalo grass and curly mesquite grass and king ranch bluestem. The group had pressed the grasses forward. Now at a vestigial angle, the stalks reflected the light more directly, like opened compact mirrors, whitening it. McCarson described this effect later; for the moment, my experience remained completely secondhand—even after he had amplified the sign by walking right over it, my glances fell nowhere.

I could see that moisture had strengthened and limbered up the grasses: instead of breaking and lying inert after receiving their foot-blows, which makes for the brightest reflection, they had been rebounding in slow motion for many hours, and had nearly regained their posture, although adhering rain droplets now pulled them down like sinkers and a jittery wind ceaselessly repositioned them. Under the dingy, dropped-down clouds, the reflective power of the grass was negligible, and the rainy light shrank the color differences.

The mesquite thickened; the grasses faded out; the static of drizzle hardened the ground and corroded the sign. "This is some tough cuttin'," McCarson said, neutrally. The terrain was too stingy for prints, but the walkers had scored the earth with the soles of their shoes, and McCarson was following the scuff marks, which were often the size of fingernail clippings and about as much lighter than the surrounding earth as a No. 2 pencil is lighter than a No. 1.

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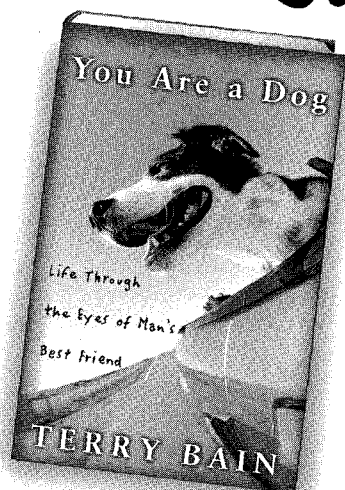


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hoof-crushed earth, McCarson found fractional footprints. Largely dismantled by drizzle and generally separated by a quarter mile, they were about the size of suit buttons. For retracing purposes, he marked them by scraping a line in the adjacent dirt with his cane. He kept moving and held the silence of his concentration, but there was satisfaction in the absoluteness of the stroke and the granular conclusive sound itself: *shhhick!*

The ground was still hardening; the rain-erosion got worse. McCarson slowed, occasionally bending down a little and poking something diagnostically with his cane, but he never crouched and almost never came to a full stop.

"Well, we're just suckin' on the hind teat on this one," he said. A minute later he said, "Oh, by God, that's them!" and accelerated down an alley of spectral sign. Five minutes later, he slowed again. "The odds of following these five are pretty slim in these ground conditions," he said. "We're losin' so much time just tryin' to stay on the sign, we won't really catch 'em unless we take a risk."

So we held their line and walked fast down numberless, seemingly uninstruc-tive trails. McCarson's trail choices appeared to be random, but he was sensing the path of least resistance, relating it to the group's hypothetical line of travel and behavioral tendencies, and occasionally seeing candidate sign. A few times, where the ground turned permissive, we swept perpendicularly back and forth, hoping for trapped sign. After fifteen minutes, McCarson said he was beginning to doubt the trueness of the line.

We walked windingly for maybe a mile. Suddenly McCarson stopped, reached down, and picked something up. All the quick walking had reminded me that we were operating in undifferentiated wilderness the size of two Rhode Islands. McCarson stood and opened his palm. In it was an aspirin-size mud clot distinguished by a sole-honed ridge with a strict curvature. He handed it to me and kept going. A ludicrously deteriorated trail of disturbance had nonetheless held its integrity, in McCarson's eyes, for about five miles. The clot seemed talismanic. But we never got a forward cut, the weather didn't improve, and the trail died.

"We never know who we're gonna catch," McCarson told me on the way

back to the station. "The weather plays a tremendous role. You get into drought conditions and you can run groups until you lose daylight and never stall out. A hard rain and you lose all your sign. It's just shithouse luck if we catch 'em."

"Our real effectiveness is in actin' as a screenin' mechanism—we're a deterrent, which is not something you can really see out in the field, and some agents that might not love tracking get really hung up on that. They can't get over it, and they turn into sorry, disgruntled agents. What this job boils down to is desire—you started with a hundred sets of tracks on your drags, and you're trying to get ten. It's not a factory job—there's no boss, you're not stamping out a number of product. What determines that you should try to catch those ten when ninety are already gone? I know what you really wanna ask, which you haven't asked it yet, is how many get away. Well, they all get away. That's the answer. Eventually, they all get away."

McCarson grew up working on his grandfather's ranch, outside Comstock, which is about fifty miles northwest of Brackettville. The ranch didn't keep him entirely busy; as soon as he was old enough, he began hiring himself out to bigger local ranches, where he worked through the daylight hours and then traded money at cards and dice in bunkhouses until he could spend it in town on his day off. He never felt a desire to leave southwest Texas. He studied government at Angelo State University, but by the time he graduated livestock-raising in the region had lost most of its commercial viability.

McCarson had always liked the gun-slinging look of Comstock's Border Patrol agents, and noticed that they often worked without supervision. "That's what really did it," McCarson told me. "Because I liked to hunt and fish, and it looked more like huntin' and fishin' than workin'—they'd give you a vehicle and you were on your own."

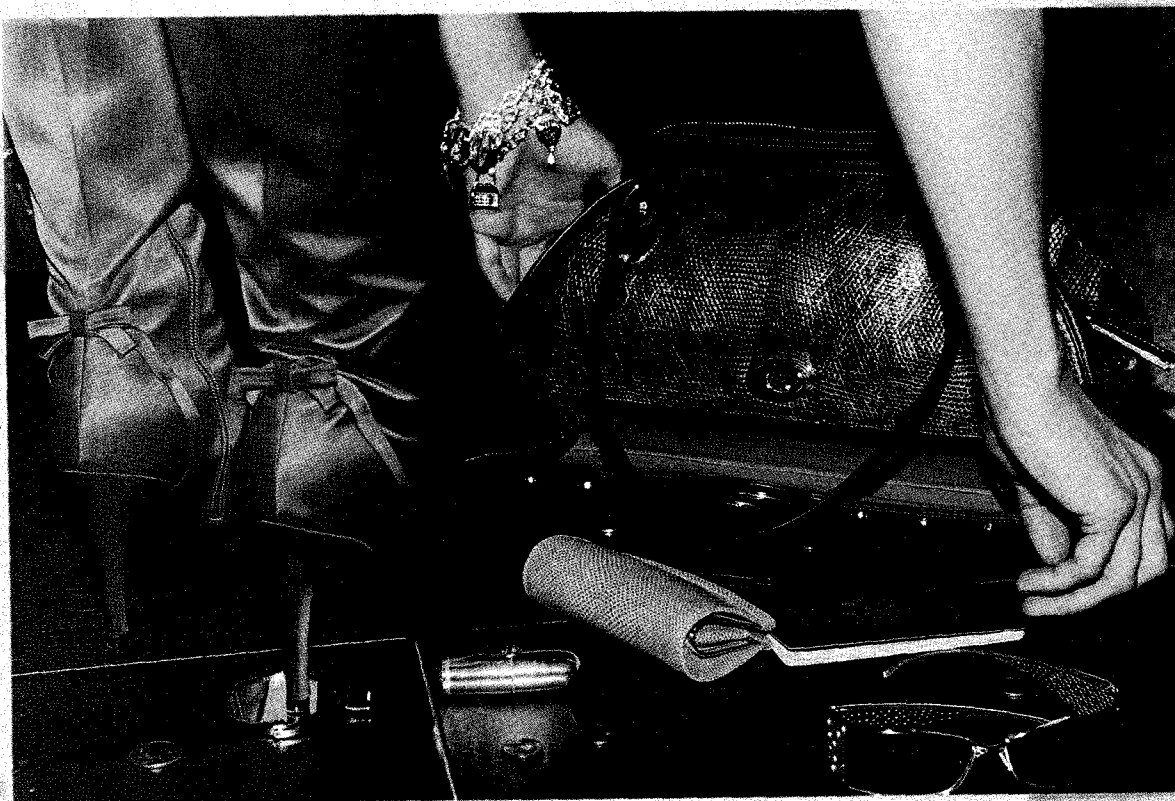
When he began tracking, he saw immediately that his hunting skills were almost useless for following people. Border Patrol trainees learn to track informally and opportunistically, tailing journeymen on live trails and asking questions as circumstances permit. McCarson augmented the process by walking exhausted,

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still-legible trails whenever he could, as far as he could, which is generally encouraged but not frequently undertaken because agents have to do it on their own time.

"Everything you need to know about tracking I can explain in about two sentences," he told me. "You're evaluating the ground for the difference between the disturbance made by humans and the disturbance made by any other force. After that, it's all practice. It's all just looking."

A planetary difference in vision separates great trackers from ordinary trackers. At Brackettville, McCarson and about a dozen other trackers occupy a paramount plane. "There's just a certain level you get to, where you can't say who's better," McCarson says. "And I can't even tell you what that level is as far as particular sign—it's just, if there's something there, we'll see it."

One slow day, after driving the length of a blank drag, McCarson gave me a concentrated lesson. We parked at the edge of a ranch road. In the adjacent dirt, day-old prints held faintly for a while and then disappeared into mesquite. McCarson checked the angle of the sign and pointed at the horizon, toward the group's destination. Then he pointed at a deer trail. "I can see all *kinda* sign through there," he said, and strolled off to make a cell-phone call.

But there was nothing to see: vacant inflexible earth, sparse mesquite-branch detritus, mesquite leaves in inconsistent profusion, various and occasional flat square-inch plants—beggar's-lice, horehound, hedge parsley—and rare tufts of short grasses. All color fell along a drastically shortened mustard-olive-ash continuum. The longer I went without see-

ing anything, the harder I looked at tiny things close by, and the more obdurately flawless they seemed.

McCarson ambled back. "You wanna see more but you ain't," he said. "That's the maximum the earth's gonna give you." He aimed his cane at some beggar's-lice. I got close and saw that several stalks had been nudged forward and now leaned at a slight angle, maybe thirty degrees from their natural posture. McCarson pointed to two seedpods the size of ball bearings which had exploded under downward pressure. He pointed to a half-inch mesquite twig that listed a little; its bark at the contact point was a fine-particulate smear. He pointed to a piece of ground the size of a playing card: half the stalks in a tuft of buffalo grass were stabbing ardently forward, and the adjoining earth had also been compressed—once spherical granules and clods of soil urged down toward two dimensions—and this compression was continuous and equivalent in degree through the two mediums of grass and earth.

These pygmy symbols were all within six feet, but they were isolated, camouflaged, and enclosed by a lot of pristine terrain—they didn't relate to one another directionally. McCarson waited for a moment while my eyes struggled to absorb them, and then strolled off. My eyes didn't absorb anything. I was afraid to move and contaminate the sign: I'd been immobilized by tininess. From somewhere in the brush, McCarson said into his cell phone, "Did those spearguns come in yet?"

After a while, he came back and pointed to a small area in a patch of mesquite leaves, which are very thin. I couldn't see anything; the leaves appeared to be flush with the ground. Then I got to within a few inches and noticed that they hovered microns above it, as if they'd been levitated by some exceptionally weak force—static electricity raising arm hairs or surface tension holding water above a glass rim. McCarson's area—he kept his cane trained on it—was composed of undamaged leaves that were truly flush with or partially embedded in the earth. The compacted region was a few inches long and about the width of a shoe sole.

"See those dingleberry bushes?" McCarson said. They were the size of Ping-Pong balls, and from a distance I couldn't

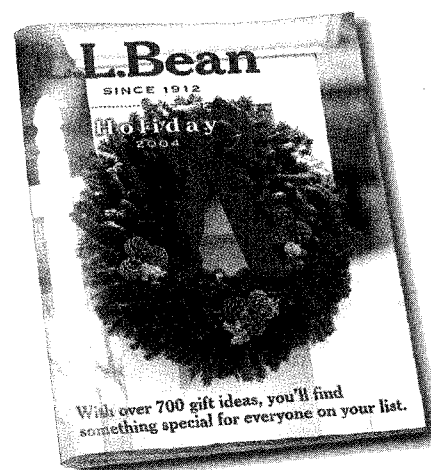


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"Oh, Christ—it's your mother."

tell that they'd been crushed: in two dimensions, they retained their fundamental color and some unbroken seeds and a remnant network infrastructure, the way road-killed toads can look like living toads minus a dimension. Up close, I saw fine fragmentation and a uniformity of flattening—a broad pad of compression—that only a shoe, not an angular hoof or a puncturing paw, could have made.

Sign cutting is overwhelmingly hushed and uneventful, but the screen of the ground shows action. Trackers find bits of skin and sock on the fishhook spines of horse-crippler cactus and watch the stride transformation and inexorable decline in mobility as the injury worsens. They watch as groups exhaust themselves and start resting more frequently, and as disoriented or fractious groups splinter. The day after a moonless night, the ground shows walkers equivocally chafing their way through mesquite thickets.

Agents watch as weak people stop so that everyone else can go on, and as they later stand up and try to keep going or give up and try to get caught. Very occasionally, in summer, the ground leads Brackettville agents to corpses. Death in the brush is notable for the attempts that dying people make to undress: a dehydrated, overheated body swells as death approaches, so the dying remove their

shirts and shoes and socks, and unbuckle their belts. They seem to find comfort in order, folding items of clothing and arranging their belongings. They prefer to die under the boughs of trees, on their backs.

After a few nights sleeping in the brush, people emanate an odor of campfire smoke and sweat that can float for hours over an abandoned campsite. In wetter weather, the smell of canned sardines persists for a day. Cutting trails, agents step over shit and piss and blood and spit. They find handkerchiefs, pocket Bibles, bottles of Pert Plus, and photographs of daughters with notes on the back ("*Te extraño. Regresa a casa pronto. Te Amo, Isela*"). They find message-board graffiti on water tanks ("*23/2/03 Por Aquí Pasó Costa Chelo Felipe L. Miguel*"), and the roasted remains of emus, doves, jackrabbits, and javelinas. The great majority of illegal immigrants are adult men, but sometimes agents find diapers and tampons and tiny shoes.

As trackers move through diffuse fields of abandoned objects, fixing the age of the sign, they assure themselves that they're walking through a group's recent past. They want to walk right into its present. They want the sign to turn into its authors. On live trails, the metamorphosis feels imminent, because it always could be. Groups stop unpre-

dictably; if your group lays up at the right time, you'll find yourself disconcertingly deep in a marginal trail yet two minutes from an arroyo filled with snoring. The people you're chasing might appear on the other side of every rise you crest.

Because sign is so shifty and strongly insinuating, it's hard to avoid equating the trail with the people it evokes. Trackers say they're "running" or "chasing" a trail; they say they just "caught" a trail; they say, "That trail got away." The language of tracking treats the sign at the leading edge of a trail as the group itself. After cutting a trail's frontier, trackers say things like "They're in this pasture," or "They're right there trying to find a good spot to jump the fence," or, simply, "They're here."

When you start to see sign, everything unrelated to the trail vacates your mind. Sign cutting is a vigil with no clear object: the sign mediums continuously reconstitute themselves. You often find valuable dominant indicators, but you have to will yourself to remain receptively nonpartisan; otherwise you'll steadily grow blind to divergent marks, and terrain changes will instantly cloak the trail.

Eventually, the microworld entrances: every plant has distinct attitudes and behaviors beyond the obvious—the way it holds its berries, carries and orients and discards its leaves, shrivels and responds to wind, bends with the weight of raindrops. Soil classes reorganize themselves uniquely after a rain. Rocks erode and array themselves in singular patterns. And color and form at that scale are infinitely variable: a cluster of scrub-oak leaves is a thousand shades.

But every medium has, beneath its variability, a composite architecture and a native range of hues, and this is what you have to see, because divergence from it is sign. If you remain rigidly zoomed in, you pick up the endless variations and they hypnotize you and veil the composite. You can't memorize precise schemes of coloration and structure—although the best trackers hold in their heads very good approximations of the hybrid aesthetics of scores of terrain types—but you can learn to see how particular facets of unadulterated landscape acquire a range of colors and shapes over time, so that when you look at a pasture or stream

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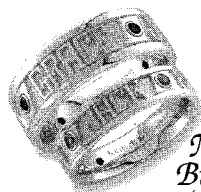
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bank or anthill you grasp its physical essence and all its natural deviations, and interlocking shapes and colors quickly declare themselves to you. When rain liquefies the ground beneath branch litter, the twigs sink and the liquid soil adheres to the million unique contours of wood and bark and stiffens into a perfect seal. Later, running the trail after the ground has hardened almost beyond compressibility, you'll unconsciously seek out broken seals: millimetre-wide earthworks of shattered crust.

After about an hour and a hundred confirmed sightings, the trail's autonomous sign began to cohere. First it was a stirring paraphrase of recent movement, and then an expression of willfulness pressed into the ground: the overarching intent of a journey. This filled me with an almost violent exultation whose energy was instantly focussed on the next span of information. I couldn't help experiencing sympathetic sensations: I'd see a sneaker-cracked branch and feel it breaking underfoot; I'd see a recently embedded rock and feel my sole bending over it.

McCarson gradually taught me to look for the identifying rhythm of the trail. Group size and behavior correspond to a certain frequency of potential sign; the potential is realized according to the receptivity of the terrain. If two people walk fast and abreast of each other over hard ground while concealing their sign, they'll leave transparent traces; if fifteen people ingenuously plod single-file over impressionable earth, they'll basically plow a new road. Our linear group of five was mainly concerned with speed; they didn't brush out on drags or attempt to walk along the hard edges of animal trails; they didn't bother to avoid print-trapping sandy soil. They didn't stop, and they left nothing behind. Without quite realizing it, I began to think of them as professionals, moving wordlessly in a kind of improvisational accord.

Ultimately, I began to see disturbance before I'd identified any evidence. A piece of ground would appear oddly distressed, but I couldn't point to any explicit transformation. Even up close, I couldn't really tell, so I didn't say anything. But I kept seeing a kind of sorcerous disturbance. It didn't seem entirely related to vision—it was more like a perceptual unquiet. After a while, I pointed to a little

region that seemed to exude unease and asked McCarson if it was sign. "Yup," he said. "Really?" I said. "Really?" "Yup," McCarson said.

McCarson experienced this phenomenon at several additional orders of subtlety. In recalcitrant terrain, after a long absence of sign, he'd say, "There's something gone wrong there." I'd ask what, and he'd say, "I don't know—just disturbance." But he knew it was human disturbance, and his divinations almost always led to clearer sign. Once, we were cutting a cattle trail—grazing cows had ripped up the sign, which had been laid down with extreme faintness—and McCarson pointed to a spot and said, "I'm likin' the way this looks here. I'm likin' everything about this." He perceived some human quality in a series of superficial pressings no wider than toadstools, set amid many hoof-compressions of powerfully similar sizes and colors and depths. I could see no aberration at all, from five inches or five feet: it was a cow path. But McCarson liked some physical attribute, and the relative arrangement and general positioning of the impressions. Maybe he could have stood there and parsed the factors—probably, although you never stop on live trails—but he wouldn't have had any words to describe them, because there are no words.

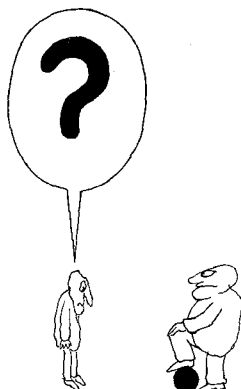
A few days later, some agents were chasing a group of twelve who had crossed the river well after midnight. They had incised their tread marks on many powdered-up roads and drags—the chief identifier was "a motion wave with lugs around it in a horseshoe in the heel"—and tracking conditions in the brush were good, so at all points the line of travel was easy to establish and forward cuts came quickly.

As McCarson drove fast down ranch roads in quest of cuts, the radio transmitted updates: "I got 'em here at this deer blind—they got a real good shine on 'em." "They're crossing another road right here—hold on, there's some fresh toilet paper." "I got 'em laid up here in a real new jacal"—a branch shelter that illegal immigrants sometimes make—"and I got their campfire, still real warm." Around the fire were slick peach pits and cans with sardine juice in them—a scene so vibrant it was like seeing the group disappear around a corner. "This is

lookin' like one of those rare storybook-endin' trails," McCarson said. "Just *click-click-click-click*."

Two cuts later, we were at the trail's apex, where six Border Patrol S.U.V.s and about ten agents had converged. The sign described a sudden dispersal into opaque brush: the group had heard its pursuers and taken off. The agents were staring contentedly into meshes of mesquite. A green-and-gold Border Patrol helicopter appeared and dropped to about twelve feet above the thicket, raucously rotor-washing everything; it nosed around the mesquite for about three minutes, and then the pilot's voice came stereophonically out of everyone's radio, saying the group was thirty yards away, prone beneath an absurdly undersized camouflage tarp. The junior agents surrounded the hiding place and yelled instructions; twelve depleted men crawled out. The agents told them to sit in a row, perfunctorily searched them, and began discussing transportation arrangements. The captives were all young men; without speaking, they moved from vigilance to dejection to resignation. They received permission to eat, and pulled out Cokes and canned corn and tuna and slices of Wonder Bread and plastic jugs of biologically tinted water.

When I was in southwest Texas, I watched Brackettville agents catch twenty-six people in five groups—all, except this one, by sensor or routine observation or accident. Every capture was quiet: no running, no resistance. In eighteen years, McCarson has drawn his gun two times. He has never fired it. The captured groups were representative: no one had drugs or warrants or enough previous captures to justify detention and criminal charges. The illegal immigrants were all adult men seeking work, tired and disinclined to flee: the chances of es-



caping after visual contact are slim, and the turnaround time is fast—the Del Rio sector runs a daily shuttle back to Ciudad Acuña. After the capture and pat-down, agents and immigrants, in a momentary common languor, stood around and talked sparingly about the weather or the river level or noteworthy episodes from the immigrants' voyage.

"We just got lost," an older man with a bronchial cough told me one cold dawn, after he and his four underdressed companions, loitering at a highway intersection, had been searched and ushered into a Border Patrol S.U.V. "The stars—the stars were our map at night, but look at the clouds. Look at the sky." It was impervious, and had been for the past two nights.

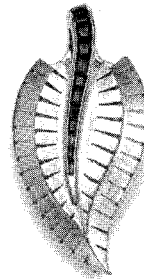
Once, I lay on my stomach in a mesquite thicket, waiting with two agents for a group of four that had tripped a sensor. The agents yelled and leaped forward only when the men were within ten feet; the group seized up and went submissively slack in a single motion. After the pat-down, one man began ruefully emptying from his pockets a collection of pretty rocks; for some reason, the agents and I looked away. Walking back to the truck, the men began heedlessly climbing a barbed-wire fence; one of the agents gave them a patient lesson in how to scale it. Another time, a guy whose group had been spotted from the air sociably handed an agent a big rattle and said he'd killed a six-foot snake. The agent examined the rattle deferentially, shook it, said, "That's a big snake," returned the rattle, walked the group of men to his truck, and locked them in the back.

Now McCarson and a few other senior agents were leaning against an S.U.V., watching the junior agents, who were watching the detainees finish their food. I was thinking that as trackers follow illegal immigrants, often right at the mesmerizing limit of what they can detect, they're mustering up the emotions and sensations of mercurial imaginary travellers, and then the imaginary is suddenly, alienatingly replaced by the real: men physically homogenized by days in the brush, all with the same propulsive need. It's a need no Border Patrol tracker will ever be able to identify with. Before the twelve men finished eating, McCarson walked back to his truck and radioed Brackettville to see if anything else was pending. ♦

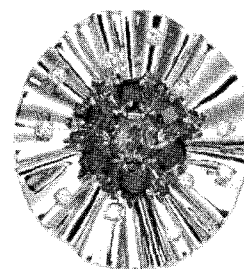
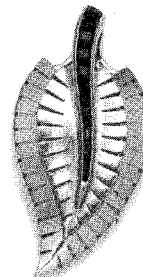
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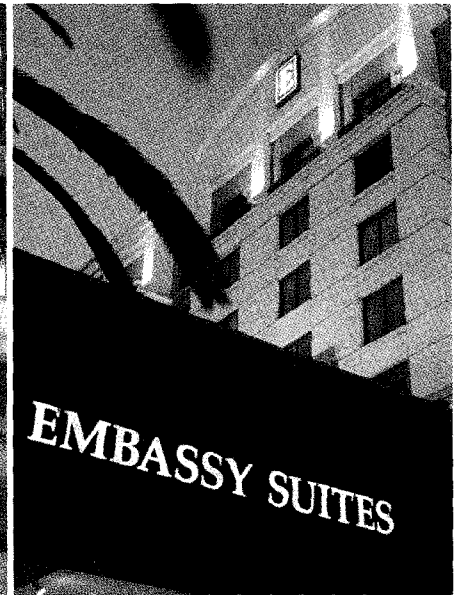
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Business travelers have always been the decision-makers at Embassy Suites Hotels. When the first property opened in 1984, it was a showcase for what research had shown they wanted: the spaciousness and privacy of a suite with two separate rooms; the wake-up call of a cooked-to-order breakfast, on the house; and a nightly manager's reception featuring your favorite beverages and snacks.

Not surprisingly, this generosity drew a lot of loyal fans, and many more hotels were built. In 1992 the expansion prompted Embassy Suites to give guests something else: a pledge that if they weren't pleased with their stay at any of the hotels, they could get their money back. It was called the 100% Satisfaction Guarantee, and when it was first offered senior vice president Jim Hartigan thought the company "had lost its mind." Then an assistant manager in Indianapolis, he feared "we'd be giving away money hand over fist." Now in charge of quality assurance, Hartigan has learned "I had nothing to fear. The guarantee put the emphasis on getting it right for every guest the first time, and that became the culture we all embraced."

IT'S YOUR CALL

In its ultimate expression, the 100% Satisfaction Guarantee means that if you have a complaint, every staff member is authorized to do whatever it takes to correct the situation, and to refund your money

if all else fails. "Guests determine their satisfaction," Hartigan says. "The guarantee was another way to put them in control of their hotel experience, along with the suites, complimentary cooked-to-order breakfast, and nightly manager's reception."

The bottom line shows that for Embassy Suites Hotels the incentive

"The guarantee was another way to put them in control of their hotel experience."

to get things right has been remarkably effective. The refund rate is only about one-quarter of one per cent. Of those guests who do opt for it, according to the company's fifty thousand detailed annual customer surveys, almost all choose to return.

YOU'RE AT THE CENTER

What customers can't see is how the guarantee puts them at the center of every decision, from what room service should be providing for travel-weary arrivals to when to replace carpets and furnishings. Some of the results are evident. Recently, high-speed Internet access was extended to all spaces, including the atriums of all hotels, and more comfortable mattresses were installed, along with more pillows and three sheets on each bed. Each suite is furnished with two large TVs, a microwave, minifridge, and *USA Today*, to go with the comfort of a couch, armchair, and dining table.

But just as importantly, many decisions result in things guests don't see. Hartigan explains, "If we're going to paint the walls of a corridor or restripe the parking lot, we make doubly sure it won't affect guests." So the guarantee insures thoughtfulness.

It also underscores teamwork and value. Nobody pulls rank or cuts corners. They know they can't afford to, because what is guaranteed is that you're in charge. ■

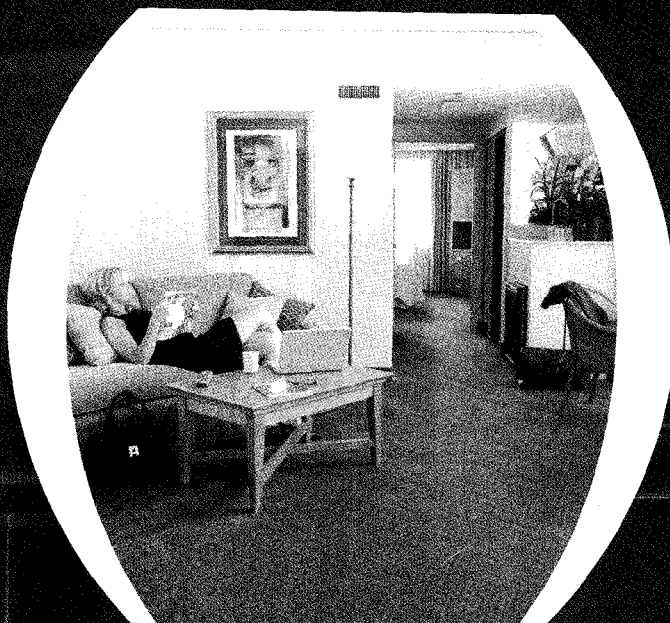
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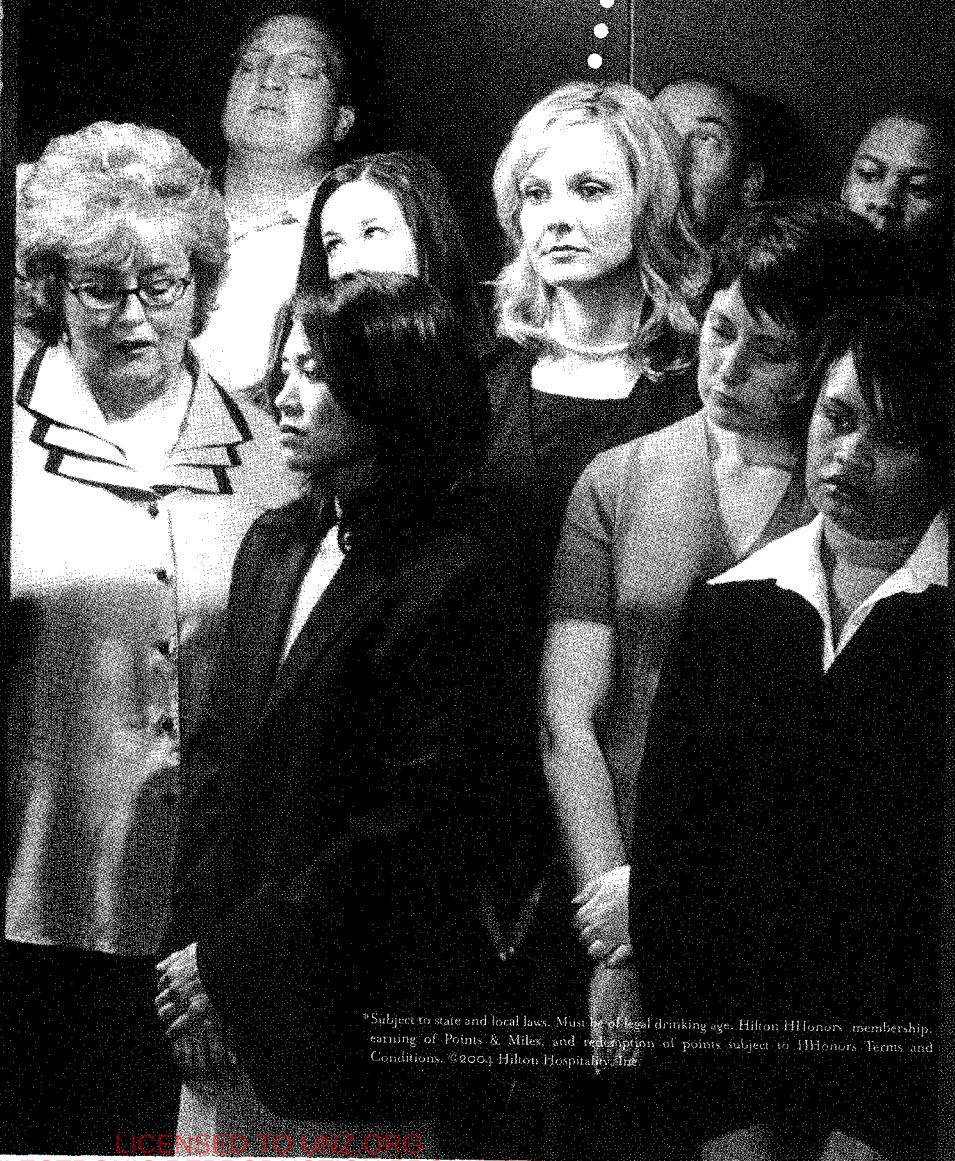
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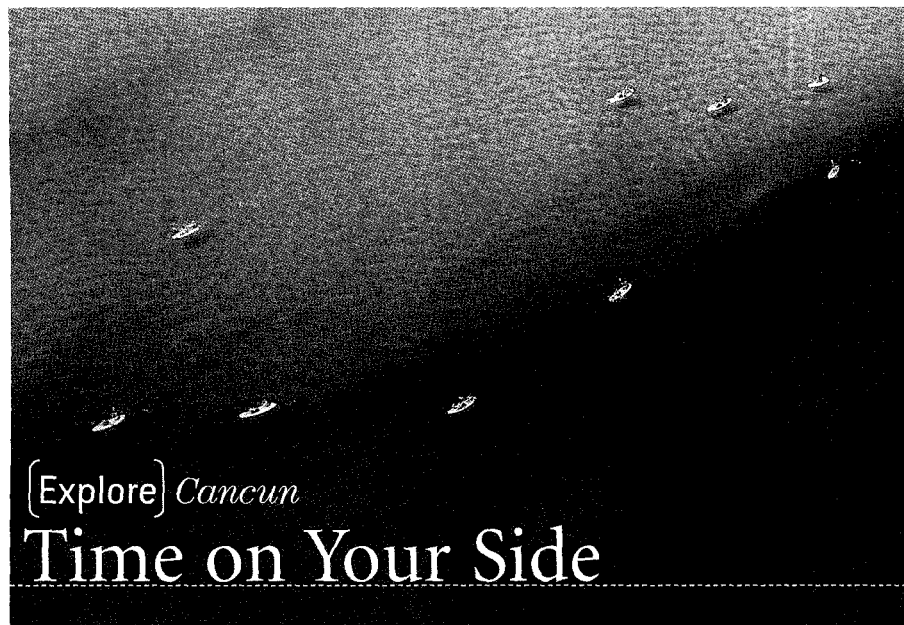


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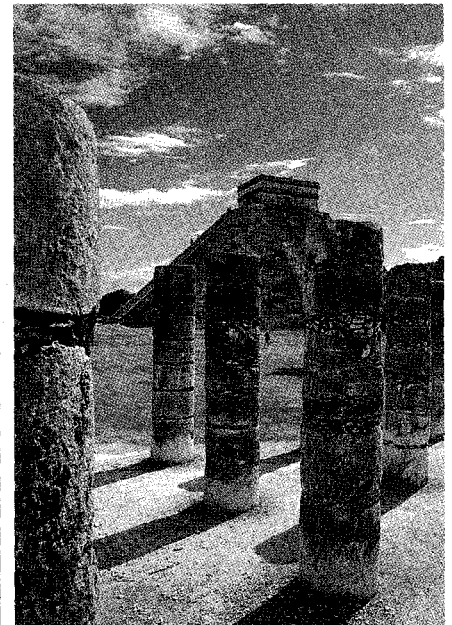
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[Explore] *Cancun*

Time on Your Side



The magical realism of Cancun extends from the coral reef at its doorstep, the largest in the Western Hemisphere, to the Maya temples at Chichén Itzá, a thousand years yet three hours away. The colors are kaleidoscopic, from the fish flashing crayon-bright in the clear sea to the Caribbean stretching turquoise beyond the white, powder-soft sand.

With the intent to be close to history, the fourteen-mile barrier island, Zona Hotelera, is where some hundred opulent resorts have been built in the last thirty years. Here visitors can connect with time as they wish, whether by finding its continuities in indigenous culture, looking ahead to the next beat of salsa or the next bite of snapper, or by leaving it behind in an undersea adventure.

For one of the most indulgent connections, the new Kayantá Spa at the elegant Ritz-Carlton, Cancun, features among its many therapies a Mayan Sanctuary Massage, which is performed at night in a palapa on the beach by candlelight. The Maya-inspired spa at the JW Marriott Cancun highlights treatments based on indigenous materials and rituals. Sybarites love the jade and roses body wrap, with petals lavished all over the body and jade stones placed at every energy point.

The more intimate, European-style Le Meridien Cancun is known for the skin care at its Spa del Mar; diners at its restaurant, Aioli, savor local ingredients beautifully integrated into Mediterranean cuisine. Golfers who want both privacy and convenient links can check into the concierge-served villas at the Hilton Cancun Beach & Golf Resort, which has a splendid seafood showcase at its Japanese restaurant, Mitachi. The Fiesta Americana Grand Aqua is due to open shortly with the height of luxury in its butler-

served grand club rooms and minimalist décor in its New American restaurant and Maya-Asian spa.

Cancun's underwater show is open to anyone who can swim—and even those who can't, via glass-bottom boats—since visibility allows divers to look up at the sky from a depth of fifty feet. Two popular options: snorkeling and diving excursions to Manchones

"From its coral reefs to its antiquities, Cancun awaits, three hours away."

reef, between Cancun and Isla Mujeres, and deep-sea fishing trips beyond Isla Mujeres for wahoo, barracuda, and kingfish.

On terra firma, it's worth venturing the short distance to Cancun City to browse the crafts markets, sample casual Mexican fare, and, in the evening, hear flamenco and fusion at the jazz club, Roots. To taste of time itself, dine at Labná, which features classic Yucatecan dishes, such as spice-rubbed pork baked in banana leaves, and baby shark with black beans, tortillas, and tomato sauce. This is a style of cooking that builds sensations in layers of seasonings, ingredients, and techniques incorporated over centuries. And in its delectable complexity, it is the perfect complement to day trips to the majestic Maya ruins. ■



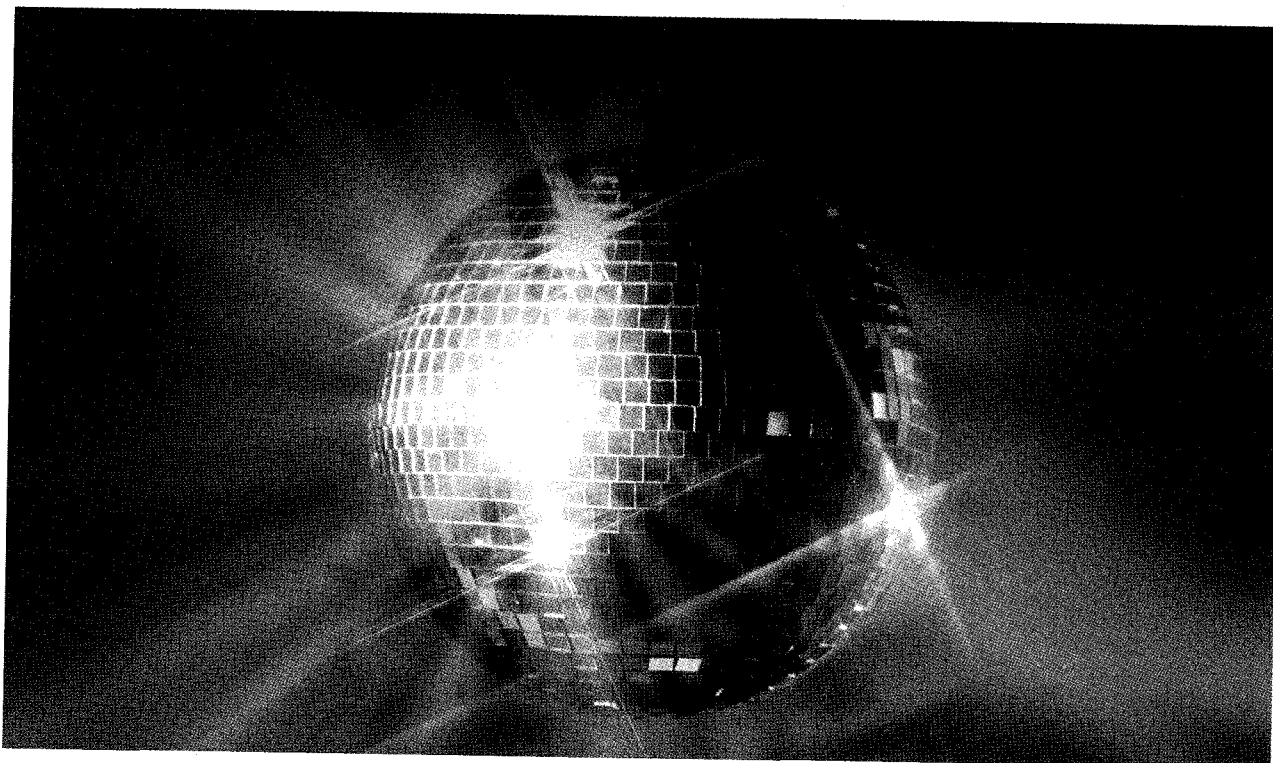
There are direct flights to Cancun from New York, Boston, Chicago, St. Louis, Dallas-Fort Worth, and Miami on American Airlines, and Cancun airport is less than ten miles from many major hotels. For more information or reservations, contact American Airlines Vacations at 800-321-2121 or visit www.aavacations.com.

TEMPLES AND PYRAMIDS

Chichén Itzá, southwest of Cancun, was the most important city in Yucatán from the tenth through the twelfth centuries. Several hundred structures remain, including the ninety-eight-foot-tall pyramid El Castillo, topped by the temple to the Toltec god Quetzalcóatl. Also near Cancun: Cobá, a vast, but mostly unexcavated, city in the jungle, has Yucatán's largest pyramid; and Tulum, a Mayan city not conquered by the Spanish, provides spectacular Caribbean views.



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REFLECTIONS

OLD FAITHFUL

Testing the limits of love.

BY DAVID SEDARIS

Out of nowhere I developed this lump. I think it was a cyst or a boil, one of those words you associate with trolls, and it was right on my tailbone, like a peach pit. That's what it felt like, anyway. I was afraid to look. At first it was just this insignificant knot, but as it grew larger it started to hurt. Sitting became difficult, and forget about lying on my back or bending over. By day five my tailbone was throbbing and I told myself, just as I had the day before, that if this kept up I was going to see a doctor. "I mean it," I said. I even went so far as to pull out the phone book and turn my back on it, hoping that the boil would know that I meant business and go away on its own. But of course it didn't.

All of this took place in London, which is cruelly, insanely expensive. My boyfriend, Hugh, and I went to the movies one night, and our tickets cost a total of forty dollars, this after spending sixty dollars on pizzas. And these were mini-pizzas, not much bigger than pancakes. Given the price of a simple evening out, I figured that a doctor's visit would cost about the same as a customized van. More than the money, though, I was afraid of the diagnosis. "Lower-back cancer," the doctor would say. "It looks like we'll have to remove your entire bottom."

Actually, this being England, he'd probably have said "bum," a word I have never really cottoned to. The sad thing is that they could remove my ass and most people wouldn't even notice. It's so insubstantial that the boil was actually an improvement, something like a bustle but filled with poison. The only real drawback was the pain.

For the first few days I kept my discomfort to myself, thinking all the while of what a good example I was setting. When Hugh feels bad, you hear about it immediately. A tiny splinter works itself into his palm and he claims

to know exactly how Jesus must have felt on the Cross. He demands sympathy for insect bites and paper cuts, while I have to lose at least a quart of blood before I get so much as a pat on the hand.

One time in France we were lucky enough to catch an identical stomach virus. It was a twenty-four-hour bug, the kind that completely empties you out and takes away your will to live. You'd get a glass of water, but that would involve standing, and so instead you just sort of stare toward the kitchen, hoping that maybe one of the pipes will burst, and the water will come to you. We had the exact same symptoms, yet he insisted that his virus was much more powerful than mine. I suspected the same thing, so there we were, competing over who was the sickest.

"You can at least move your hands," he said.

"No," I told him, "it was the wind that moved them. I have no muscle control whatsoever."

"Liar."

"Well, that's a nice thing to say to someone who'll probably die during the night. Thanks a lot, pal."

At such times you have to wonder how things got to this point. You meet someone and fall in love, then thirteen years later you're lying on the floor in a foreign country, promising, hoping, as a matter of principle, that you'll be dead by sunrise. "I'll show you," I moaned, and then I must have fallen back to sleep.

When Hugh and I bicker over who is in the most pain, I think back to my first boyfriend, whom I met while I was in my late twenties. Something about our combination was rotten, and as a result we competed over everything, no matter how petty. When someone laughed at one of his jokes, I would need to make that person laugh harder. If I found something at a yard sale, he would have to find something better—

and so on. My boyfriend's mother was a handful, and every year, just before Christmas, she would schedule a mammogram, knowing she would not get the results until after the holidays. The remote possibility of cancer was something to hang over her children's heads, just out of reach, like mistletoe, and she took great pleasure in arranging it. The family would gather and she'd tear up, saying, "I don't want to spoil your happiness, but this may well be our last Christmas together." Other times, if somebody had something going on—a wedding, a graduation—she'd go in for exploratory surgery, anything to capture and hold attention. By the time I finally met her, she did not have a single organ that had not been touched by human hands. "Oh, my God," I thought, watching her cry on our living-room sofa, "my boyfriend's family is more fucked up than my own." I mean, this actually bothered me.

We were together for six years, and when we finally broke up I felt like a failure, a divorced person. I now had what the self-help books called relationship baggage, which I would carry around for the rest of my life. The trick was to meet someone with similar baggage, and form a matching set, but how would one go about finding such a person? Bars were out; I knew that much. I'd met my first boyfriend at a place called the Man Hole—not the sort of name that suggests fidelity. It was like meeting someone at Fisticuffs and then complaining when he turned out to be violent. To be fair, he had never actually promised to be monogamous. That was my idea, and I tried my hardest to convert him, but the allure of other people was just too great.

Almost all of the gay couples I knew at that time had some sort of an arrangement. Boyfriend A could sleep with someone else as long as he didn't bring him home—or as long as he *did* bring him home. And boyfriend B was free to do the same. It was a good setup for those who enjoyed variety and the thrill of the hunt, but to me it was just scary, and way too much work—like having one job while applying for another. One boyfriend was all I could handle, all I wanted to handle, really, and while I found this to be perfectly natural, my friends saw it as a form of repression

and came to view me as something of a puritan. Am I? I wondered. But there were buckles to polish, and stones to kneel upon, and so I put the question out of my mind.

I needed a boyfriend as conventional as I was, and luckily I found one—just met him one evening through a mutual friend. I was thirty-three and Hugh had just turned thirty. Like me, he had recently broken up with someone, and had moved to New York to start over. His former boyfriend had been a lot like mine, and we spent our first few weeks comparing notes. "Did he ever say he was going out for a hamburger and then—"

"—hook up with someone he'd met that afternoon on a bus? Yes!"

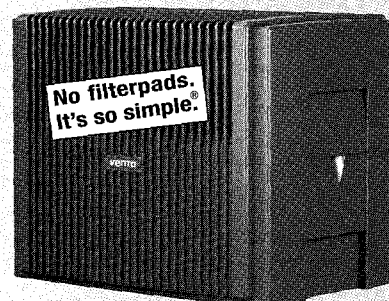
We had a few practical things in common as well, but what really brought Hugh and me together was our mutual fear of abandonment and group sex. It was a foundation, and we built on it, adding our fears of AIDS and pierced nipples, of commitment ceremonies and the loss of self-control. In dreams sometimes I'll discover a handsome stranger waiting in my hotel room. He's usually someone I've seen earlier that day, on the street or in a television commercial, and now he's naked and beckoning me toward the bed. I look at my key, convinced that I have the wrong room, and when he springs forward and reaches for my zipper I run for the door, which is inevitably made of snakes or hot tar, one of those maddening, hard-to-clean building materials so often used in dreams. The handle moves this way and that, and while struggling to grab it I stammer an explanation as to why I can't go through with this. "I have a boyfriend, see, and, well, the thing is that he'd kill me if he ever found out I'd been, you know, unfaithful or anything."

Really, though, it's not the fear of Hugh's punishment that stops me. I remember once riding in the car with my dad. I was twelve, and it was just the two of us, coming home from the bank. We'd been silent for blocks, when out of nowhere he turned to me and said, "I want you to know that I've never once cheated on your mother."

"Um. O.K.," I said. And then he turned on the radio and listened to a football game.

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"He says he no longer recognizes our mandate."

Years later, I mentioned this incident to a friend, who speculated that my father had said this specifically because he *had* been unfaithful. "That was a guilty conscience talking," she said, but I knew that she was wrong. More likely my father was having some problem at work and needed to remind himself that he was not completely worthless. It sounds like something you'd read on a movie poster, but sometimes the sins you haven't committed are all you have to hold on to. If you're really desperate, you might find yourself groping, saying, for example, "I've never killed anyone *with a hammer*" or "I've never stolen from anyone *who didn't deserve it*." But, whatever his faults, my dad did not have to stoop quite that low.

I have never cheated on a boyfriend, and, as with my father, it's become part of my idea of myself. In my foiled wet dreams I can glimpse at what my life would be like without my perfect record, of how lost I'd feel without this scrap of integrity, and the fear is enough to wake me up. Once I'm awake, though, I tend to lie there, wondering if I've made a terrible mistake.

In books and movies infidelity always looks so compelling, so right. Here are people who defy petty convention and are rewarded with only the tastiest bits of human experience. Never do they

grow old or suffer the crippling panic I feel whenever Hugh gets spontaneous and suggests we go to a restaurant.

"A restaurant? But what will we talk about?"

"I don't know," he'll say. "What does it matter?"

Alone together, I enjoy our companionable silence, but it creeps me out to sit in public, propped in our chairs like a pair of mummies. At a nearby table there's always a couple in their late seventies, blinking at their menus from behind thick glasses.

"Soup's a good thing," the wife will say, and the man will nod or grunt or fool with the stem of his wineglass. Eventually he'll look my way, and I'll catch in his eyes a look of grim recognition. "We are your future," he seems to say. "Get used to it."

I'm so afraid that Hugh and I won't have anything to talk about that now, before leaving home, I'll comb the papers and jot down a half dozen topics that might keep a conversation going at least through the entrées. The last time we ate out, I prepared by reading both the *Herald Tribune* and the *Animal Finders' Guide*, a publication devoted to exotic pets and the nuts who keep them. The waiter took our orders, and as he walked away I turned to Hugh, saying, "So, anyway, I hear that monkeys can

really become surly once they reach breeding age."

"Well, I could have told you that," he said. "It happened with my own monkey."

I tried to draw him out, but it saddens Hugh to discuss his childhood monkey. "Oh, Maxwell," he'll sigh, and within a minute he'll have started crying. Next on my list were the five warning signs of depression among captive camels, but I couldn't read my handwriting, and the topic crashed and burned after sign No. 2: an unwillingness to cush. At a nearby table an elderly woman arranged and rearranged the napkin in her lap. Her husband stared at a potted plant, and I resorted to the *Herald Tribune*. "Did you hear about those three Indian women who were burned as witches?"

"What?"

"Neighbors accused them of casting spells and burned them alive."

"Well, that's horrible," he said, slightly accusatory, as if I myself had had a hand in it. "You can't go around burning people alive, not in this day and age."

"I know it, but—"

"It's sick is what it is. I remember once when I was living in Somalia there was this woman . . ."

"Yes!" I whispered, and then I looked over at the elderly couple, thinking, See, we're talking about witch burnings! It's work, though, and it's always *my* work. If left up to Hugh, we'd just sit there acting like what we are: two people so familiar with one another they could scream. Sometimes, when I find it hard to sleep, I'll think of when we first met, of the newness of each other's body, and my impatience to know everything about this person. Looking back, I should have taken it more slowly, measured him out over the course of fifty years rather than cramming him in so quickly. By the end of our first month together, he'd been so thoroughly interrogated that all I had left was breaking news—what little had happened in the few hours since I'd last seen him. Were he a cop or an emergency-room doctor, there might have been a lot to catch up on, but, like me, Hugh works alone, so there was never much to report. "I ate some potato chips," he might say, to which I'd reply, "What kind?" or

"That's funny, so did I!" More often than not we'd just breathe into our separate receivers.

"Are you still there?"

"I'm here."

"Good. Don't hang up."

"I won't."

In New York we slept on a futon. I took the left side and would lie awake at night, looking at the closet door. In Paris we got a real bed in a room just big enough to contain it. Hugh would fall asleep immediately, the way he's always done, and I'd stare at the blank wall, wondering about all the people who had slept in this room before us. The building dated from the seventeenth century, and I envisioned musketeers in tall, soft boots, pleasuring the sorts of women who wouldn't complain when sword tips tore the sheets. I saw gentlemen in top hats and sleeping caps, women in bonnets and berets and beaded headbands, a swarm of phantom copulators all looking down and comparing my life with theirs.

After Paris came London, and a bedroom on the sixth floor with windows looking onto neat rows of Edwardian chimney tops. A friend characterized it as "a Peter Pan view," and now I can't see it any other way. I lie awake thinking of someone with a hook for a hand, and then, inevitably, of youth, and whether I have wasted it. Twenty-five years ago I was twenty-two, a young man with his whole sexual life ahead of him. How had nine thousand one hundred and twenty-five relatively uneventful days passed so quickly, and how might I slow the days ahead? In another twenty-five years I'll be seventy-two, and twenty-five years after that I'll be one of the figures haunting my Paris bedroom. Is it morally permissible, I wonder, to cheat after death? Is it even called cheating at that point? What are the rules? Do I have to wait a certain amount of time, or can I just jump or, as the case may be, seep right in?

During the period that I had my boil, these questions seemed particularly relevant. The pain was always greater after dark, and by the sixth night I was fairly certain that I was dying. Hugh had gone to sleep hours earlier, and it startled me to hear his voice. "What

do you say we lance that thing?" he said.

It's the sort of question that takes you off guard. "Did you just use the verb 'to lance'?" I asked.

He turned on the lights.

"Since when did you learn to lance boils?"

"I didn't," he said. "But I bet I could teach myself."

With anyone else I'd put up a fight, but Hugh can do just about anything he sets his mind to. This is a person who welded the plumbing pipes at his house in Normandy, then went into the cellar to make his own cheese. There's no one I trust more than him, and so I limped to the bathroom, that theatre of home surgery, where I lowered my pajama bottoms and braced myself against the towel rack, waiting as he sterilized the needle.

"This is hurting me a lot more than it's hurting you," he said. It was his standard line, but I knew that this time he was right. Worse than the boil was the stuff that came out of it. What got to me, and got to him even worse, was the stench, which was unbearable, and unlike anything I had come across before. It was, I thought, what evil must smell like—not an evil person but the wicked ideas that have made him that way. How could a person continue to live with something so rotten inside? And so much of it! "How are you doing back there?" I asked, but he was dry-heaving and couldn't answer.

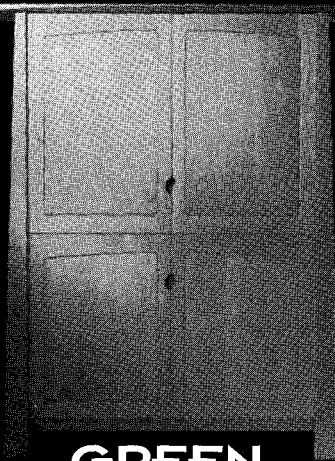
When my boil was empty, he doused it with alcohol and put a bandage on it, as if it had been a minor injury, a shaving cut, a skinned knee, something normal he hadn't milked like a dead cow. And this, to me, was worth at least a hundred of the hundred and twenty nights of Sodom. Back in bed I referred to him as Sir Lance-A-Lot.

"Once is not a lot," he said.

This was true, but Sir Lance Occasionally lacks a certain ring. "Besides," I said, "I know you'll do it again if I need you to. We're an elderly monogamous couple, and this is all part of the bargain."

The thought of this kept Hugh awake that night, and still does. We go to bed and he stares toward the window as I sleep soundly beside him, my bandaged boil silently weeping onto the sheets. ♦

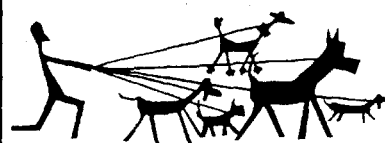
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BY JANET MALCOLM

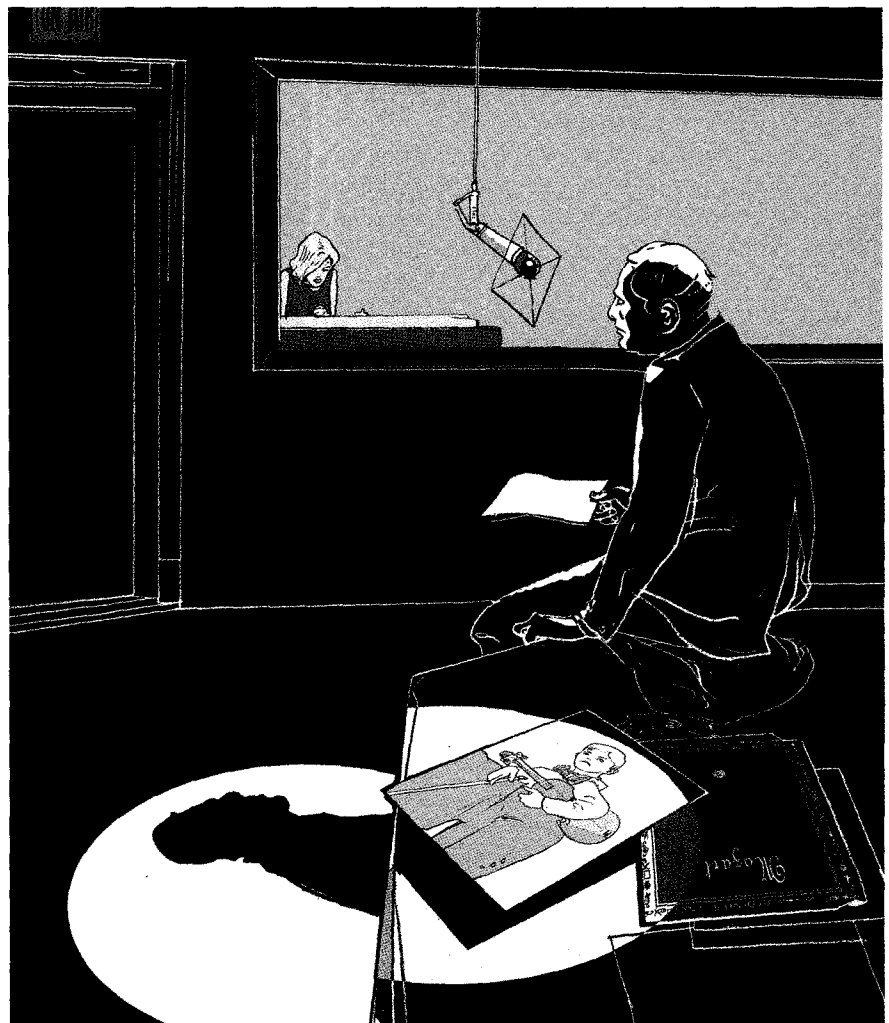
In the spring of 1939, the father of the historian Peter Gay had a fateful premonition. As Gay writes in his memoir, "My German Question: Growing Up in Nazi Berlin," he and his parents were booked on a ship called the *St. Louis*, scheduled to leave Hamburg, Germany, for Havana, Cuba, on May 13th. But something told the father to switch to a ship called the *Iberia*, leaving for Havana two weeks earlier. On May 27th, a fortnight after the Gays (or Fröhlichs, as they were then known) safely reached Havana, the *St. Louis* arrived, and was overtaken by a ghastly tragedy. Nine hundred and seven Jewish refugees on board never set foot on Cuban soil. The Cuban government, with inexplicable callousness and arbitrariness, revoked their landing permits, and barred them from leaving the ship. The *St. Louis* circled the Caribbean, seeking asylum for its passengers, but no country, including our own, would take them. The ship finally returned to Europe, where four countries—Belgium, France, Holland, and England—accepted a quarter of the passengers each. The two hundred and eighty-seven refugees who went to England were the fortunate ones. Of those who went to Belgium, France, and Holland, only around forty survived the Nazi Occupation. Gay remembers standing in the harbor of Havana and watching the tragedy unfold. "It was thanks to [him] that we were looking at the *St. Louis* rather than traveling on it," he writes of his prescient father, and adds, "Would I have survived if we too had been passengers on that ill-fated ship, to end up an American citizen, an American family man, an American professor? The simple figures tell the story: the odds would have been against it."

Among the other fortunate passengers on the *Iberia* was a nineteen-year-old Hungarian Jew named George Jellinek, whose father, too, had been prescient, though, as it turned out, not prescient

enough. Jellinek senior, who owned a restaurant in Budapest, felt the necessity of getting his son out of Hungary as war appeared inevitable and conscription in the Hungarian Army probable, but did not foresee the unimaginable. Jellinek's parents stayed in Hungary and

gration whose impact on postwar American culture has yet to be fully chronicled. If he is not among this emigration's most imposing figures, he is surely one of its most genial spirits. For thirty-six years, his hour-long radio program "The Vocal Scene" has given extraordinary pleasure to large numbers of listeners, and when it goes off the air, at the end of the year, its like will surely not be heard again.

Devotees of the program tend to be older people. I listened to "The Vocal Scene" on WQXR many years ago and began listening to it again after happening upon it one evening last April. It acted on me like a madeleine. It powerfully



George Jellinek has celebrated opera on "The Vocal Scene" for thirty-six years.

perished in the Holocaust. His sister, Eva, who also stayed, survived by means of false papers.

Jellinek eventually reached New York—Cuba was only a way station for refugees waiting to be admitted to America—and became part of an emi-

evoked my childhood in the nineteen-forties, when there was no television and families sat around in the evening listening to the radio—in the case of my family, to classical music. I could scarcely believe that Jellinek was still alive—he must be in his hundreds. Later, I discov-

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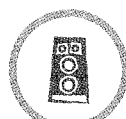
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ered that my memory of listening to Jellinek when I was a child in the forties was a false one; "The Vocal Scene" did not begin until 1969. But such is the period flavor of the program, such is its atmosphere of anachronism, that my mistake is understandable.

"Hello, this is George Jellinek," says a voice at the outset of "The Vocal Scene." This voice is at least as integral to the pleasure of the program as are those of the opera singers which fill the hour with gorgeous sound. It is a voice with a slight hoarseness and a pronounced foreign accent. It is a voice also inflected by cheerfulness, kindness, intelligence, and slight hamminess. The program on the night I rediscovered "The Vocal Scene" was entitled "Eight Ways to Sing an Aria," and began with this Jellinek commentary:

In the third act of Gounod's "Faust," the rejuvenated Faust comes to Marguerite's house. He is already fascinated by the girl, and Mephisto has already awaked in him a physical desire for her. But the music Gounod wrote for this scene is almost entirely devoid of sensuality. The tone is almost worshipful in the aria "Salut, demeure chaste et pure" (I greet you, chaste and pure dwelling). We may know the outcome of Faust's visit, but at this juncture the tenor should *not* sound like a seducer. He should project a passion restrained by a sense of spirituality that transforms Marguerite's garden into something like a shrine. . . . We are about to hear this aria performed by eight different tenors ranging over sixty years of recorded history. This may seem like a reckless venture on my part, but I feel confident that you will find this hour neither dull nor monotonous.

Jellinek's confidence was not misplaced. "Salut, demeure chaste et pure" is one of French opera's most ravishing arias. One does not have to see the opera's setting of a dark garden; one hears it in the music's lush sweetness. After listening to the aria once, one wants to hear it again; after eight times, one is satisfied but not sated. The eight tenors—César Vezzani (singing on a 1931 recording), Georges Thill (1930), Helge Roswaenge (1928), Jussi Björling (1949), Beniamino Gigli (1931), Plácido Domingo (1979), Richard Leech (1991), and Ivan Kozlovsky (1949)—gave eight conspicuously distinct interpretations. Some sang in French, and others in German, Italian, or, in one case, Russian. A little drama was provided by the high C that comes near the aria's end. How would the tenors dispatch it? Like baseball players at bat, they swung at the C. Some of them hit it out of the park; others didn't. "His high C is impressive," Jellinek said of Vezzani, but added, "That high C should not be judged in isolation. It is contained within a long legato phrase, 'où se devine la présence,' and Vezzani, like most tenors, takes a breath before 'la présence' in order to be able to negotiate that high C. No serious damage is done, but the legato arc is broken." Björling earned Jellinek's praise for taking "that entire crucial phrase . . .

on one unbroken breath." At the same time, Björling's French "is only passable."

When I visited Jellinek at his home, in Hastings-on-Hudson, a few weeks later, I had to revise my image of him as a frail, very old man with a deeply lined Central European face and a shabby ill-fitting suit. In actuality, Jellinek is a sturdy, vigorous man of eighty-four, with a full, handsome face and the air of someone who knows that his suit is well cut. Moreover, he does not seem particularly foreign, nor does his accent seem as pronounced as it does when it comes from his disembodied voice. When we size each other up, our eyes evidently trump our ears; the actual Jellinek comes across as a fairly, if not entirely, regular American.

I come from a refugee family myself, and some of what has always drawn me to "The Vocal Scene" is my association of Jellinek with the New York émigré community to which my parents belonged during and after the Second World War. One of the striking characteristics of this community was its achievement—you could even say its overachievement—of mastering English. These émigrés made it their business to speak and write English that was not only grammatically correct but idiomatic beyond the requirements of ordinary usage. The pride that my father and his fellow-émigrés took in their ability to stroll through the language as if it were a field of wildflowers from which they could gather choice specimens—of stale standard expressions and faded slang—is touchingly evoked by Jellinek's radio commentaries. His accent only magnifies the predictability of the language he writes in—which, of course, is the language that all but the poets among us use. Just a few degrees separate Jellinek's English from that of the native-born. However, those degrees give it its character and flavor and place it in a time that is not our own.

Jellinek and his wife, Hedy, a retired economist, live in a two-bedroom apartment with a view of the Hudson in an unpretentious brick apartment building near the shore. Like Jellinek's commentaries, the Jellinek apartment gave me a feeling of déjà vu. It is furnished with the mixture of fifties American modern furniture and upholstery and late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century European pic-



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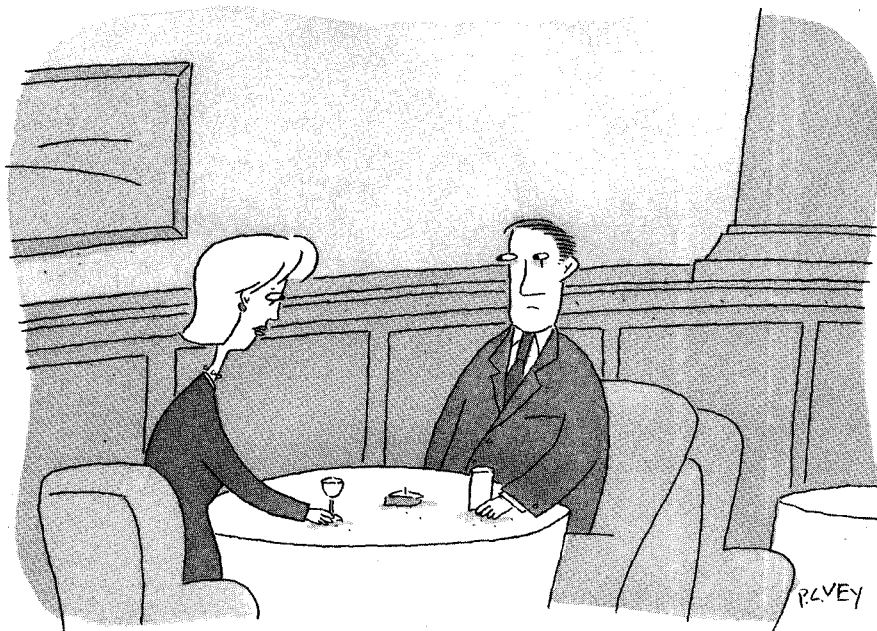
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"I don't want my grandchildren growing up in a world where you're their grandfather."

tures and objects that constituted the homes of the émigrés I used to know. The Old World relics at the Jellineks'—photographs of Austro-Hungarian grandparents and great-grandparents in ornate gold frames, old prints and drawings, vases and bowls of European crystal and porcelain—derive almost entirely from Hedy's side of the family. She and her parents left Nazi Vienna in 1938. Among the very few traces in the Jellinek apartment of George's prewar life is an oval studio photograph of him as a boy in short pants with a violin tucked under his arm and a wonderful, schmalztily serious look on his six-year-old face.

As Hedy served tea and pastries at a long table in a dining alcove, George spoke of his early life. Hedy confined herself to the role of hostess and supportive spouse, disclosing almost nothing about herself, and occasionally allowing a sense of tartness to emerge. George said he had studied the violin for eleven years, but never practiced enough to become a virtuoso performer. He came to opera late—he saw his first opera, "La Traviata," at the age of sixteen. "I was a typical chamber-music snob," he said. "We chamber-music people looked down on opera. It seemed like just a lot of noise and gestures, while chamber music was pure and refined. But, when opera hit, it hit me

with a vengeance. I had no exit strategy." Jellinek's father's restaurant was near the Budapest opera house, and George went to the opera almost every night. The opera season in Budapest ran from September to June, and George attended a hundred and fifty performances during each of his last two years in Hungary.

"I was rather deficient in my knowledge of French opera," Jellinek said, and when he went on to attribute this deficiency to the Francophobia by which Hungary was gripped between the world wars, I felt yet another stir of childhood memory. I remembered the condescending way my Czech parents used to talk about Hungarians. Though not in the same league with the seriously bad Germans, Hungarians were regarded as inferior and somewhat absurd in our household. We used to sing a song that went:

*Nem sere fe pekete
Gulášem se nácpete.*

The first line is nonsense, a kind of parody Hungarian. The second line is Czech and means: "With goulash you will stuff yourselves." When I reported these deplorable memories to Jellinek, he remembered, in turn, his own anti-Czech feelings. He recalled vile things that his teachers said about the (I always thought) innocuous second President of

Czechoslovakia, Edvard Beneš. All this enmity and jingoism, of course, came out of the alliances of the First World War and its aftermath. Hungary, which had fought alongside Germany, was carved up by the victorious French and English. Its most deeply resented loss was the vast region of Transylvania, given to Romania; the newly formed Czechoslovak Republic was given the smaller region of Slovakia but was only slightly less resented. As a consequence, Jellinek said, "the Hungarian government saw to it that we did not play the music of Enescu, we did not play the music of Smetana, we did not play the music of Dvořák."

After the Holocaust shattered the delusion of assimilation to which German and Central European Jews had clung until it was too late, a surviving Jew could hardly be expected to feel much of the old nationalistic pride. And yet I have to confess to the twinge of disappointment I felt when I learned that Jellinek, though his name is Czech, isn't Czech; and Jellinek himself continues to helplessly identify with his native culture. When he accepted an award from the American Hungarian Foundation in 1986, he felt it imperative to insert a bitter note: "I don't know what would have become of me in Hungary, because my native land rejected me, and my parents—who had held out bright hopes for me—were destroyed during those few years when Hungary brought disgrace to its heroic thousand-year history." But he went on to express his gratitude "for what my Hungarian heritage gave me: a terrific fundamental education, a basic understanding of history, an interest in languages, an immersion in a wonderful literature that is unfortunately unknown to much of the world, and the beginnings of my musical education. . . . And not the least of this Hungarian heritage is the recognition that, as a son of a small nation, speaking a language that is foreign to most of humanity, in order to succeed, one simply must try harder."

Jellinek's career in America is a kind of textbook example of trying harder. After he arrived in America from Cuba in the fall of 1941, he worked as a waiter in the Catskills and then—with the Spanish he had picked up in Cuba—became the Spanish correspondent for a New York export firm. He was drafted

into the U.S. Army in 1942 and served as a lieutenant in the infantry from 1944 until 1946. He considers his graduation, against all odds, from the tough officer-training school at Fort Benning, Georgia, the triumph of his life. In an article about the Fort Benning experience published in the magazine *On the Air* in 1977, Jellinek recalled walking in the woods practicing the officers' art of barking commands: "Night after night I walked among the trees that darkly towered over me, piercing the nocturnal calm with my ferocious shouts." He went on, "Do I find public speaking difficult? It's a piece of cake to the Benning graduate." At the tea table, one of the few remarks that the reticent Hedy allowed herself was to point out that, of two hundred candidates, George was one of a hundred who did not flunk out at Fort Benning.

Jellinek went overseas and fought in the final battles of the war in Europe; after the Armistice, he used the German it was obligatory for every Hungarian to learn to interrogate suspected war criminals. Back

in New York, he worked at a succession of jobs in the recorded-music field: first as a salesman at a record store called the Merit Music Shop; then at an organization concerned with music rights called the Society of European Stage Authors and Composers; then at, of all places, the Muzak Corporation; and, finally, at WQXR, which hired him as its music director. He created "The Vocal Scene" as a corrective to what he felt to be the station's inadequate coverage of operatic music. During these years, Jellinek also wrote two books, "Callas: Portrait of a Prima Donna" (1960) and "History Through the Opera Glass" (1994); reviewed records for *The Saturday Review of Literature*, *Opera News*, and the *Times*, among other publications; appeared on the Metropolitan Opera's Saturday-afternoon broadcasts; taught at N.Y.U.; and built the enormous personal collection of vocal-music records—even more enormous than WQXR's collection—that has been the backbone of "The Vocal Scene." He and Hedy were married during his second

year in America (they had met through a cousin on his first day in New York), and their daughter, Nancy, was born in 1948.

The walls in the Hastings-on-Hudson apartment that are not filled with the relics of Hedy's European past or with shelves of records and CDs are crowded with tributes to Jellinek's achievements in America. There is an honorary degree from Long Island University, an award from N.Y.U. for outstanding teaching, a Grammy, and dozens of inscribed photographs of opera singers and conductors, among them Ezio Pinza, Richard Tucker, Eugene Ormandy, André Kostelanetz, Victoria de los Angeles, Maria Callas, Marilyn Horne, and Jarmila Novotná.

During the past decade, Jellinek has been winding down his enterprise. In 1984, he retired as WQXR's music director. He has gradually sold or donated more than a thousand of his records, and he has written no new scripts since 2000. What one has been hearing on "The Vocal Scene" is slightly emended repeats of old broadcasts. Jellinek told me of

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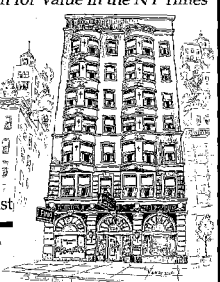
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his decision to permanently retire "The Vocal Scene" at the end of this year, and invited me to come to WQXR to observe the taping of his farewell program.

The taping was a quiet affair. The broadcast engineer, a handsome young woman named Juliana Fonda, sat at a large computerized control panel while Jellinek sat in a darkened recording booth. Before entering the booth, Jellinek discussed technical matters with Fonda. They talked in the calm, settled way of people who have worked together for a long time and know what to expect of each other. Jellinek handed her the CDs from which she was to play excerpts at the proper intervals, and disappeared into his booth. The program was devoted to music of farewell and began with a duet from the fourth act of Gounod's "Roméo et Juliette," sung by Angela Gheorghiu and Roberto Alagna. The duet's trembling sweetness, like that of "Salut, demeure chaste et pure," takes one about as far from the present moment as it is possible to get. It evokes the nineteenth century's impossible romantic yearnings. It summons images of beaded velvet costumes and flats depicting ancient parks and forests. That the velvet is threadbare, the beads grimy, and the flats faded only adds to the music's nostalgic pull. The geographic accident that put my parents in a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire that did not have to peevishly abjure French culture but, on the contrary, worshipped it makes me feel the pull especially strongly.

Jellinek next offered Bidú Sayão's rendition of Manon's farewell to her little table in Act II of Massenet's opera; followed by Joan Sutherland and Luciano Pavarotti saying addio to each other in "Rigoletto"; and Mirella Freni and José Carreras singing the finale of "Don Carlo." I glanced over at Jellinek as he read his commentary, and realized anew how great a part of the pleasure of "The Vocal Scene" is the pleasure of listening to George Jellinek. He is an artful broadcaster, reading with a storyteller's deliberation and an actor's grasp of cadence.

The "Don Carlo" selection ended the first half of the program, and Jellinek stepped out of the booth. "Any mistakes?" he asked Fonda, who shook her head. "That was the easy half," he said. And, indeed, the second half was not a piece of cake. Jellinek was nervous

and several times stumbled over words. (Whenever this happened, he would take a deep breath and then repeat the entire phrase so that it could be spliced in later.) He was obviously looking ahead to the last segment of the program. As the strains of Haydn's "Farewell Symphony" rose, he said, "And now it is time for my own personal farewell to you, and it is not easy. . . . As you can imagine, I am leaving 'The Vocal Scene' with a heavy heart, and I want to emphasize that no one is forcing me; it is my decision." He went on to speak of "the labor of love" the program had been and to say that those

who know me regard me as a modest person. But my modesty has its limits, and I am not modest enough to deny that I am very proud of what I have accomplished in the past thirty-six years. . . . Every one of my nearly two thousand programs was conceived with a central idea in mind, and your thousands of letters, postcards, and e-mail messages have assured me of your enthusiastic appreciation. I am even immodest enough to believe that my scholarship and overall experience combined with a personal style left a legacy hard to duplicate.

When Jellinek stepped out of the booth, Fonda came toward him and they embraced. Then they got to work splicing in the corrected stumbles and adjusting the length of one of the musical selections.

After the work was done, Jellinek and I went to talk in a conference room. I asked him why he was taking the program off the air instead of continuing to recycle the old broadcasts. "I am getting older and my listeners are getting older," he said. "It's time to go."

"But you will be flooded with requests to continue the broadcasts," I said. Jellinek shook his head. His mood of immodesty had passed. "I have not done anything that passes the test of immortality," he said. "Great artists pass this test. The legacy of a Rubinstein is preserved in his records. I have done nothing like that. I've done a number of clever programs."

Jellinek ushered me out of the studio, leading the way through long corridors and holding doors open with elaborate European courtesy. For the first time, I noticed that he walked with a slight sway—so slight as to be almost invisible—but one that subtly evoked the stylized movements of the czardas. I said nothing to him of this near-subliminal association, and when he reads of it here he will probably be surprised. ♦

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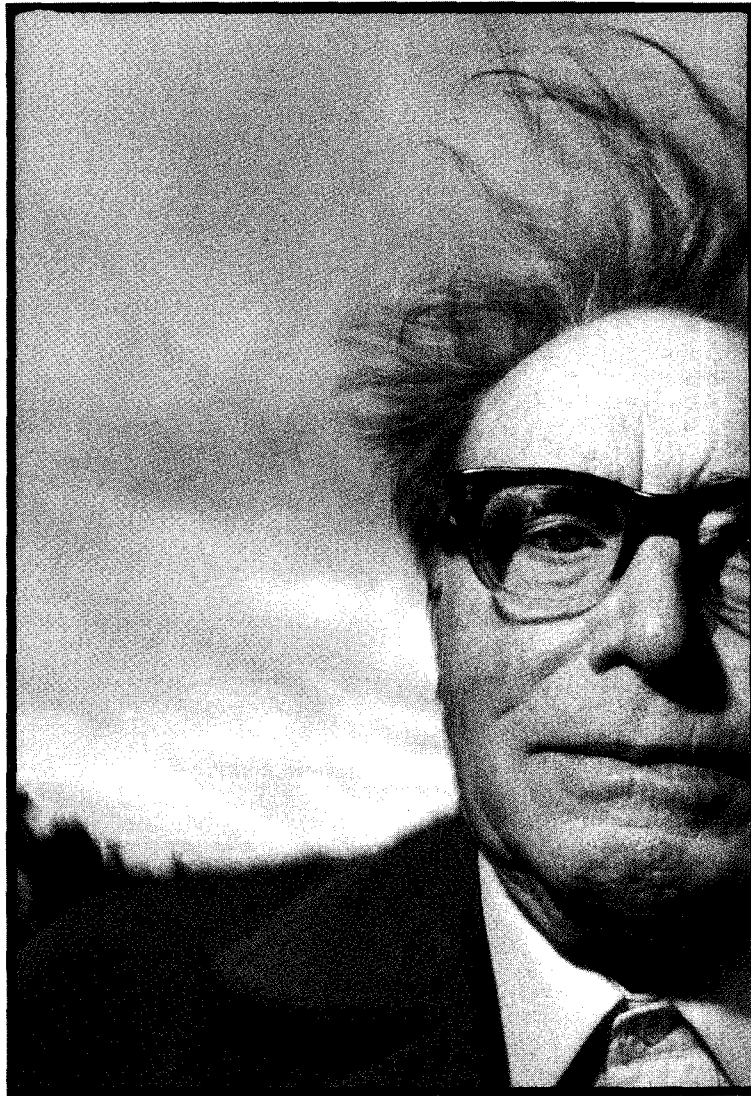
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FICTION

THE JOKE

BY RODDY DOYLE



If he went now, he'd never come back. He'd go and she wouldn't know, or care. He'd come back and the same thing: she wouldn't care. So what was the point? He wasn't going anywhere.

And that made it worse. And made him more annoyed. And angry. And stupid.

This thing now. It was nothing. The thing itself.

—No, no. He'll come and collect you.

That was it. What she had said, word for word. What had him half standing, still sitting, his fat arse hanging over the armchair.

His arse wasn't fat. But there was more of it than there used to be. Not that much more.

Anyway.

They were the words.

—No, no. He'll come and collect you.

The words themselves were harm-

less. She hadn't even been talking to him.

But that, there, was the point. She hadn't been talking to *him*. She'd been talking to someone else. She still was. On the phone. He didn't know who. Her sister, her ma, his ma. They were the even-money bets. But it could have been anyone. Her friend the adultery woman was another prospect. She was a three-to-one bet.

He wasn't a betting man. Never had been.

She was out in the kitchen; he didn't know who she was talking to. But he did know that she'd just offered his services to whoever it was at the other end.

—No, no. He'll come and collect you.

And that was the thing. And had been the thing for a long time. And he was sick of it.

Sick of what but?

He wasn't sure. The whole thing. Everything. He was just sick of it.

The invisible fuckin' man.

—No, no. He'll come and collect you.

That was who he was. What he was. The invisible man. The taken-for-granted sap. As if he was just waiting there. With nothing better to do.

Granted, he was doing nothing. But that wasn't the point. No way was it. He'd been sitting there, doing nothing in particular. But it didn't matter. If he'd been climbing Mt. Everest or upstairs in the bed, it didn't matter. It didn't bloody matter what he was or wasn't doing.

It was the fact, the thing. He didn't know how to—

Just hearing it. He was sick of it. And he couldn't say anything. Because it was so small. He could never explain it without being mean or selfish or other things that he really wasn't.

Her friend, for example. The adultery woman. They'd been friends for years. A good-looking woman. Didn't nearly look her age. And the adultery thing wasn't fair. He wasn't judging. He didn't; he never had.

Anyway. He'd been there when she'd left her husband. He'd helped her load the car, his car, with her bags and her two kids and all of their stuff. While the husband was at work, or wherever—the pub; he didn't know. And he was glad he'd done it. It had been the right thing to do. He'd never doubted it. Not once. Or resented it, or anything. The husband

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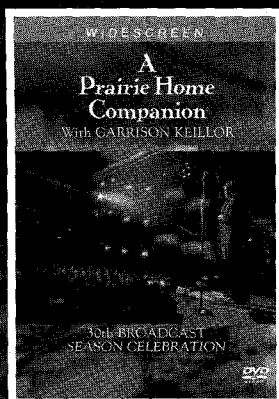


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was a bollix, an animal. She was well out of that situation. And he wouldn't have cared if the husband had come after him. The woman's jaw was strapped and broken, as she sat beside him in the car. The kids in the back were pale. It had been a good deed, that one. He'd felt a bit heroic. The wife had hugged him, kissed him, thanked him again and again.

That was the biggest example. The most dramatic.

He wasn't making his point. He was missing it.

A better example. Her mother. Not such a bad ol' one. Harmless, really, once you knew her. Anyway, he'd gone out in the pissing rain to bring her home from her bingo. More than once, and no problem. He'd been happy to do it; he'd do it again. And her sister. He'd brought her twenty Silk Cut when she was stuck at home with her broken leg. And a choc-ice.

Errands of mercy. He'd been doing them for years. And here—good—here was the point. Not once, not once—none of them had ever asked *him*.

She was still on the phone.

—Yeah, I know, yeah. God.

Not once. Fair enough, they'd all said thanks.

You're great.

You're a star.

I don't know where I'd be without you.

And that was fine. And appreciated. But none of them had ever phoned and asked to speak to him. Not once. Ever.

And it wasn't just that.

It was—

Fuckin' everything. He was sick of it. But he sat down again. His arms were getting sore, holding himself over the seat. But he hadn't changed his mind. He could still get back up; he would.

She was still on the phone. It wasn't urgent, whatever it was. He had to clear his head. He had to be clear. He was going to say no when she came looking for him. He had to know why.

It went back. Back, back, back. Ah, Jesus—years. His fault. He accepted that. Yeah. His own fault. So.

But it wasn't about the errands of mercy. She'd called them that. It wasn't just them. He had to be clear.

He'd liked it; he remembered. When she'd said that about errands of mercy.

She was drying his hair with a towel. She sat on his lap. One leg each side of his legs, right up at him.

He still had his hair. Most of it.

Lap was a stupid word.

He loved her. That was important. Back.

Give and take. There'd once been that. Partnership. That was what he'd have called it, although he didn't like that word, either. Partnership. Give and take. He brought her ma home from bingo; she sat on his lap. But that wasn't it; that just cheapened it. It wasn't about the sex. But—

That, too. Yeah, definitely.

How, but—? How was he going to get his point across without making it look like it was all about sex when it wasn't but, in a way, it was?

He'd deal with it.

Anyway.

Partnership. It had all been part of it. The relationship—another fuckin' word. They'd done things together. Even when they weren't together. He'd do the driving or the shop, clean the windows, whatever. But they'd both be involved. They'd done these things together. That was how it had felt. How it had been.

Something had happened.

Nothing had happened. It had just happened. The way things were now.

She was still in there, on the phone. He could hear her agreeing and disagreeing, with whoever. Listening, nodding. Putting her hair behind her ear.

He still loved her.

And the partnership had stopped. Somewhere. He could never have pinned it down; he'd no idea. There'd been nothing said. Nothing done. As far as he knew. But who knew?

It was a mess. He was. A mess. His anger. Moods.

He wanted to reach out. In the bed. And he couldn't. It wasn't there; he couldn't do it. He couldn't lift his hand and move it, a foot, a foot and a half—less. He couldn't do it. What had happened? What had happened?

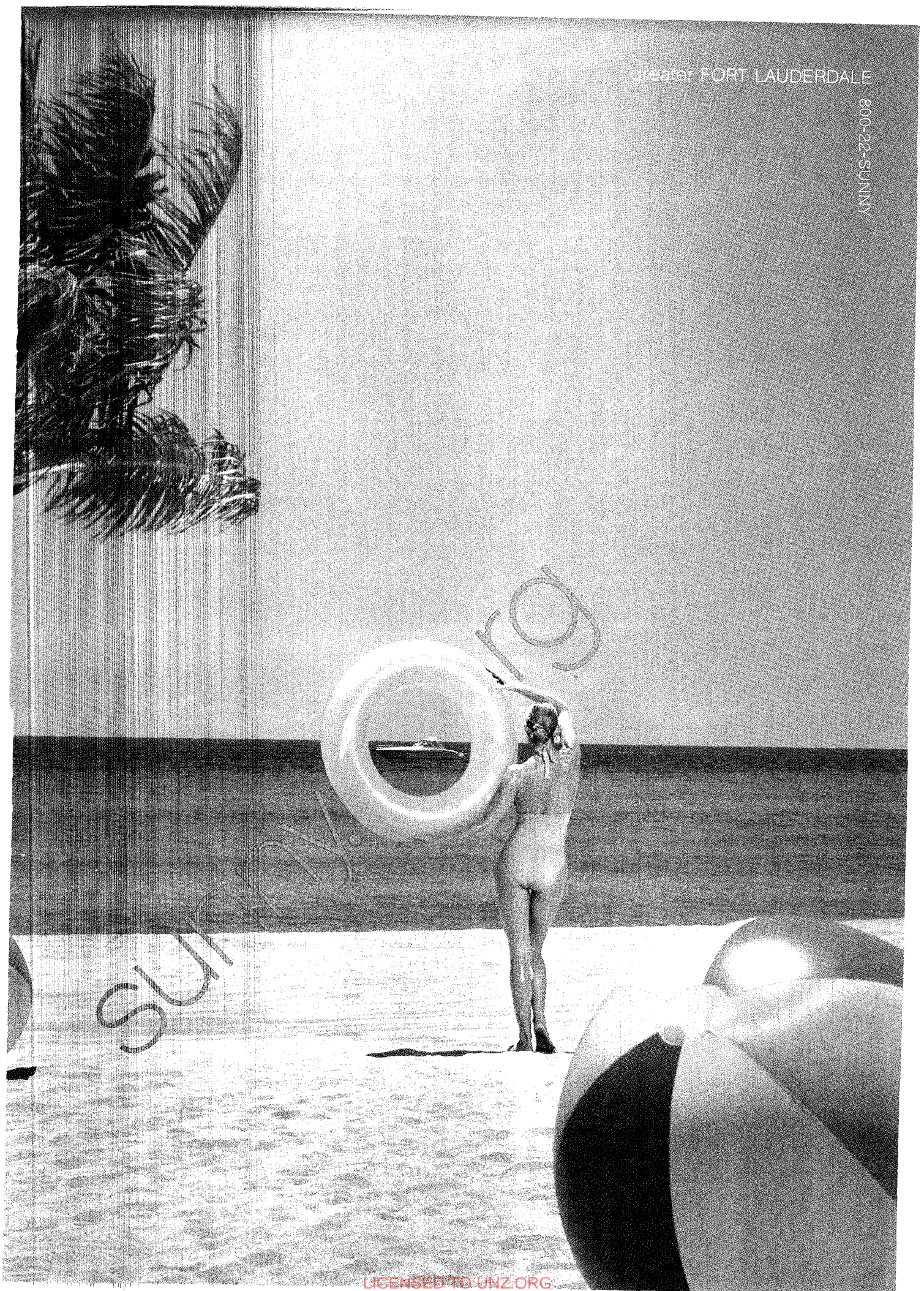
He didn't know. He honestly didn't. He didn't know.

It was a good, big telly, one of the wide-screen ones. He'd thought they could watch it together. At least that. When he'd bought it.

He was older. Fuck that, so was she. That wasn't it. He didn't think it was.

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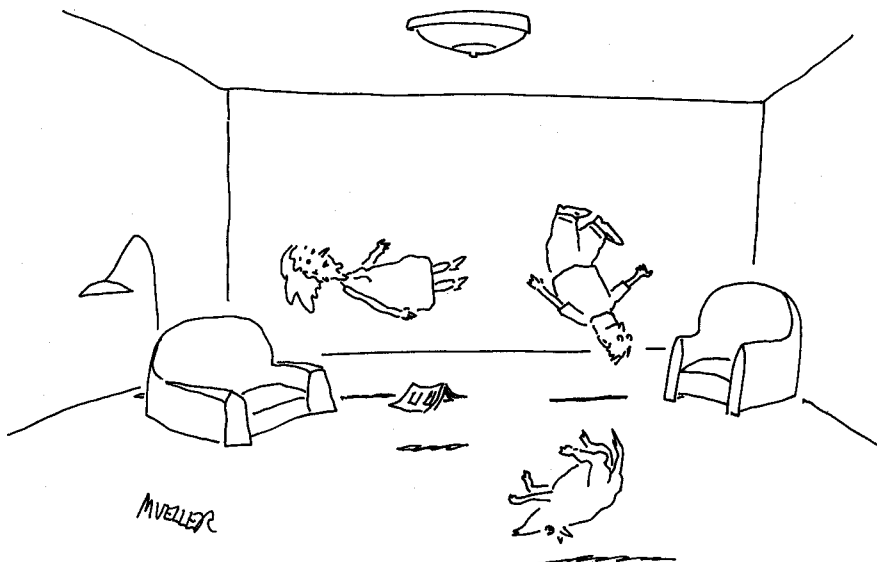
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"Did you pay the gravity bill?"

They'd never spoken about it.
What?

He didn't know. The change. The stop. He didn't know. The partnership. Fuck it, the marriage. And it wasn't true about the sex, either, exactly. They still had it, did it. Now and again. The odd time. The hands would meet. The warmth.

What was he going to say? When she came in?

She was still in there, in the kitchen. Still chatting.

He was right but. Essentially, he was right. It was gone. Something had gone wrong. Something small. Something that he hadn't even noticed. It had changed. She couldn't deny it.

And would she? Deny it? He hadn't a clue.

He used to know. He used to guess right, more often than not. What she'd say. How she'd react. They'd smile at each other, because they both knew what they were up to. She'd slap his arse when he passed. He'd put his hand on her hair. Words hadn't mattered; she'd known what he meant. I love you. I like you. I'm glad.

I love you. I like you. I'm glad.

That was it.

He used to—he could tell when she was going to say something. Before she did. Something in the air, in the atmosphere. He didn't have to be looking at her. He knew. And she did, too. And he'd liked being read that way.

He didn't know when it had stopped.

The reading. He didn't know. Maybe they still could read each other's thoughts; they just didn't. He didn't know; he didn't think so. He didn't know her. He knew her but he didn't know her. It had been a slow thing. Very gradual. He hadn't noticed.

That wasn't true. He had. He'd noticed.

But he'd done nothing.

What?

Jesus, it was terrible. Stupid.

He was angry. He was always angry.

He was always angry.

He lay awake, he woke early. It was always there. He didn't know why. Nothing had happened. Nothing big. His fault. He should have known. It was there a long time, the difference. The silence. He'd known.

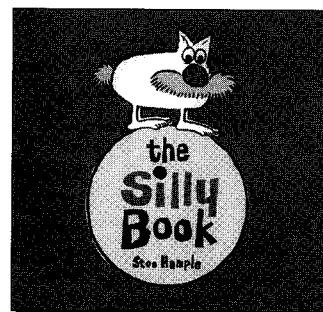
They'd never had a row. That was true, more or less. There'd never been anything serious. Small stuff. Missing keys, her ma at Christmas. Nothing big. Fundamental. Neither of them had ever stormed out or packed a bag. They'd never shouted or broken anything. There'd been nothing like that. There'd been nothing.

Maybe it was the kids.

He was blaming the kids.

He wasn't. Just, maybe that was part of what had happened. They'd never had time; they'd been too busy. Always ferrying them around, football and dancing and Scouts and discos. Then ferrying her ma as well. And her sister, and his

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ma. And her friend. The one he'd driven away from her husband.

He'd had a thing about her. He'd have admitted that. It had never come to anything. But he'd felt it. A woman who'd had sex with someone she wasn't married to. He'd been excited. That was true. At the time. Even with her kids in the back of the car. Adultery. Another word that did nothing for him.

The kids but. There was nothing in that theory. They'd been busy, run off their feet—mad stuff. But they'd had the kids in common. Even when they were upstairs, in the bed.

Is that one of them waking?

Don't stop, don't stop.

Where's his inhaler?

Don't stop!

They'd liked it. They'd loved it. At the time. And it had been a long time. Twenty-six years. What had happened?

He didn't fuckin' know.

Did she?

He didn't know.

Probably.

He didn't know.

He didn't know anything.

The telly hadn't worked. Not really. Stupid, again. The idea that a television could bring them together. Even a good one. They didn't even watch telly much. They never had. He liked the football, now and again; he wasn't that fussed. She liked the politics. "Questions and Answers." "Prime Time." There was another telly, upstairs in the bedroom. You didn't need a big screen to watch politi-

cians. The whole idea had been stupid.

The football was better on the big screen but.

He felt himself smiling. Like a fight against his face. He let it through. He smiled.

She was still on the phone. She laughed.

Like the old times. He'd smiled; she'd laughed. The way they used to know each other.

Stupid.

He was being stupid. It wasn't like the old times, nothing like the old times—whatever they were. He was by himself. She was somewhere else. There was no togetherness in it. None.

It was nice but. Her laugh. He'd always liked it.

He used to make her laugh.

God.

Could he still? Make her laugh? He doubted it. Would she want him to? He didn't know.

But he'd done it before. He'd tickled her, now and again. He couldn't do that now. Creep up behind her in the bathroom. They were never in the bathroom together. He smiled again. The thought. Creeping up behind her. She'd have fuckin' freaked. And it wasn't the only way he'd made her laugh. Words used to do it. Jokes. Playacting, acting the ejjit. She'd liked it. She'd loved it. She'd moved closer to him when she was laughing.

He could give it a try. Now. A joke. Paddy the Englishman and Paddy the Irishman were—No; it was stupid. There

was the one about the guy with no back passage. No. The one about the Irishman at the Tina Turner concert. He smiled. Too long, and she hadn't liked it the first time. He remembered.

What was he doing?

He wasn't sure.

What's the difference between a good ride and a good shite? That was a good one. Short and good. But it was so long since he'd told her a joke. He was just being thick.

They hadn't spoken since this morning.

There's the rain now.

Yeah.

There's the rain now—him.

Yeah—her.

And that was nearly—he looked at his watch—eight hours ago. And now he wanted to tell her a joke. It was mad. What's the difference between a good ride and a good shite?

Mad.

Thick. Stupid.

He wasn't angry now but. He wasn't sure why he'd been angry.

That wasn't true. He knew. But he wasn't angry now.

He'd tell her the joke. He was nervous now. It was a good one to tell but. It was short, no story to it. He'd see if it worked as he told it.

What would he see? He didn't know. It was what he wanted to see; that was the thing. Her face. He wanted to see her listening—that was all. See her face, see her listening. Knowing what he was up to. That would do.

He listened. She was out there, in the kitchen. He could hear her shoes. He knew, somehow—he didn't know how: she was finishing up. The way she was moving, like she was leaving. She was going to hang up.

What's the difference between a good ride and a good shite? He couldn't do it. It was too mad, too desperate. She'd recognize it for what it was: begging. A cry for fuckin' help.

That was stupid, too, but. It wasn't a cry for anything. And it wasn't fuckin' begging. It was only a joke. There it was now; she'd put the phone down. She was still in the kitchen. It was more than a joke. He knew that.

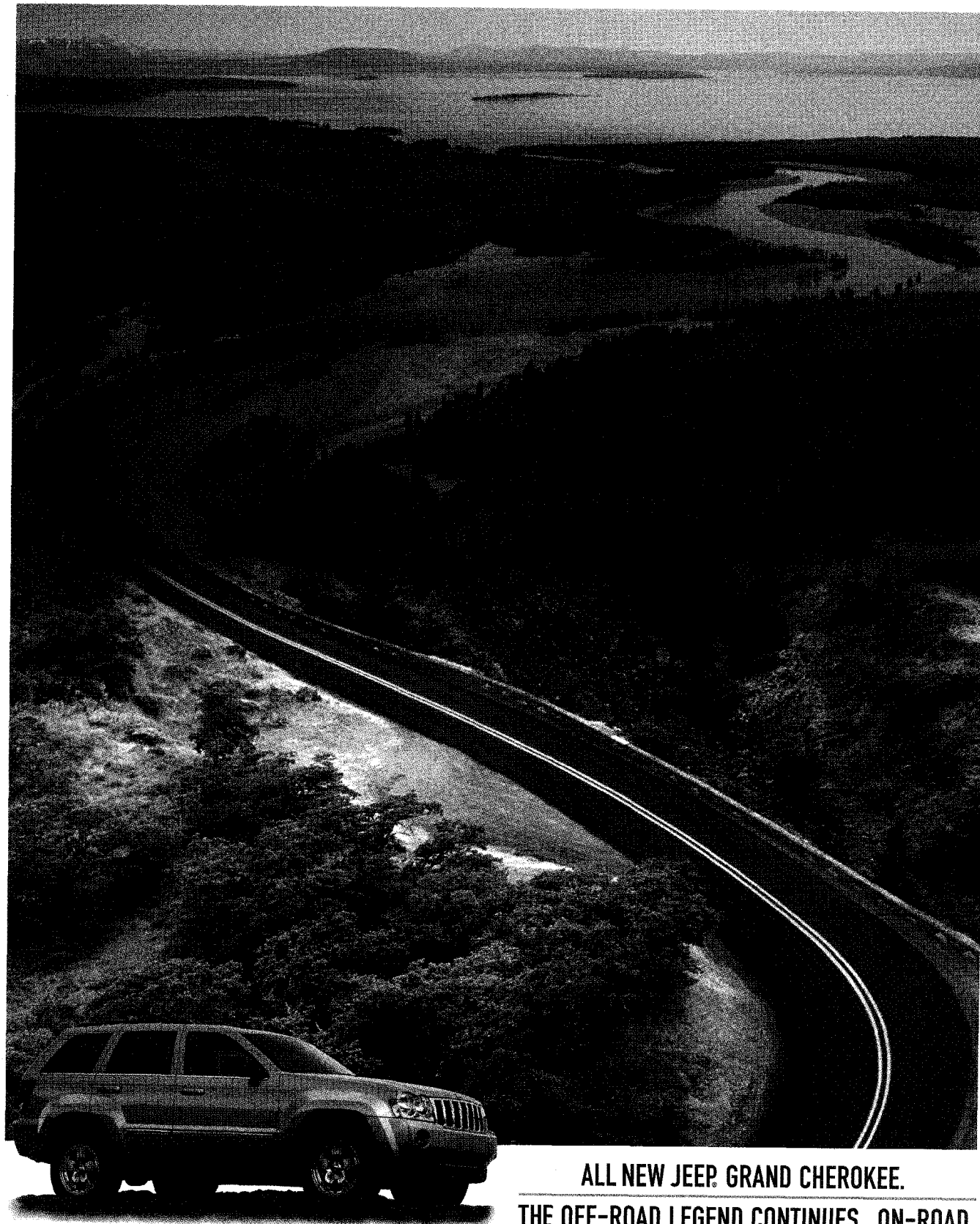
Would she know?

He could hear her now.

She came to the door. She stopped.

He looked at her. ♦





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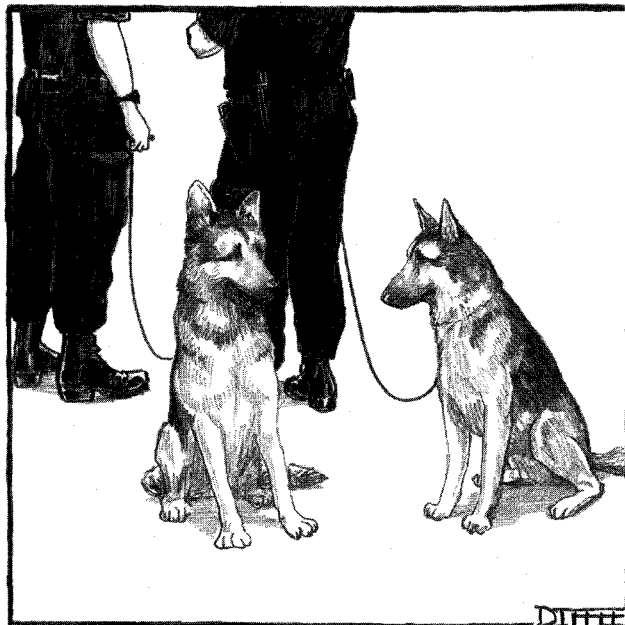


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THE FUNNIES



"O.K.—but just this once."



"I'm starting to really like the smell of cocaine."

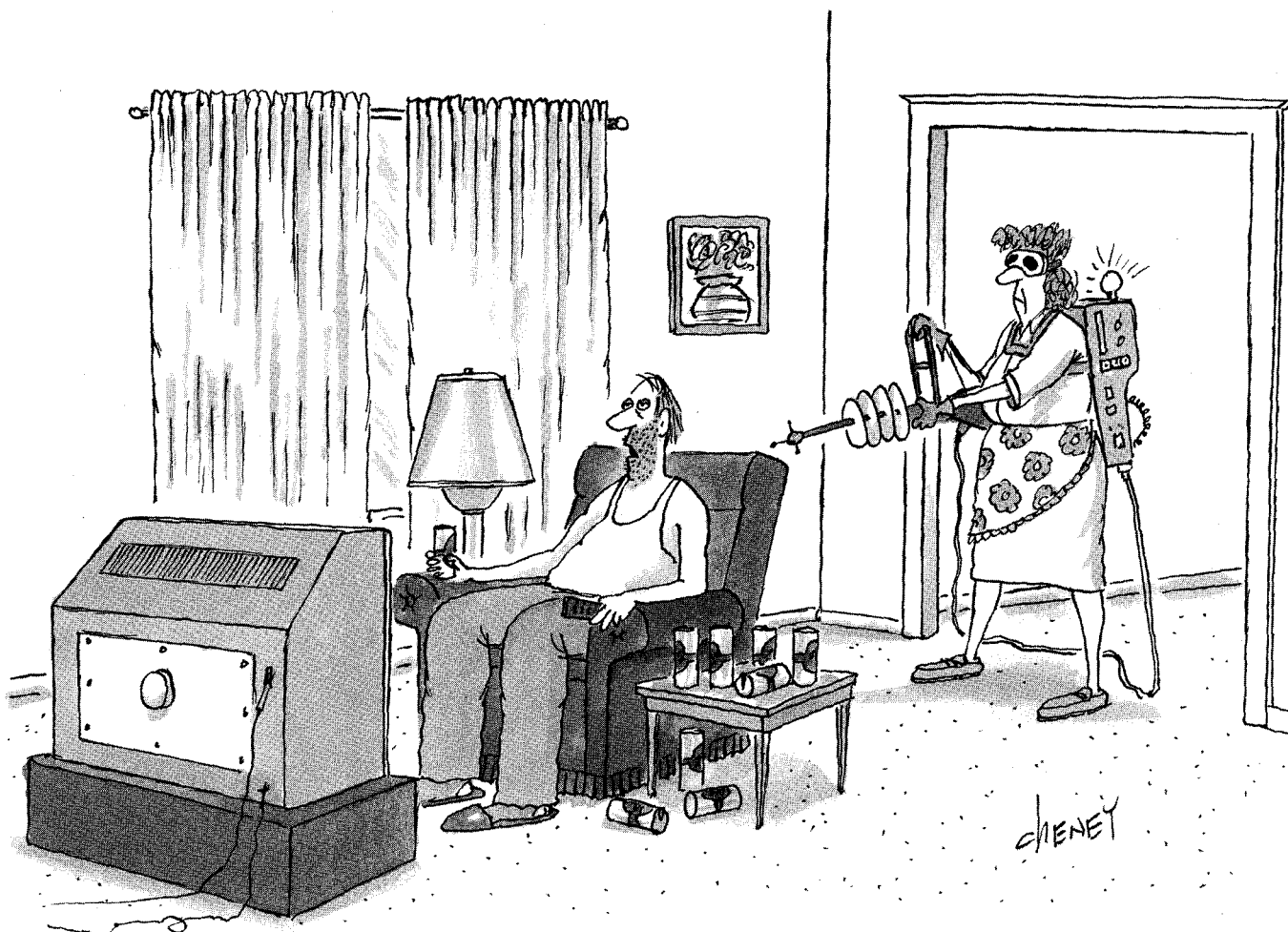




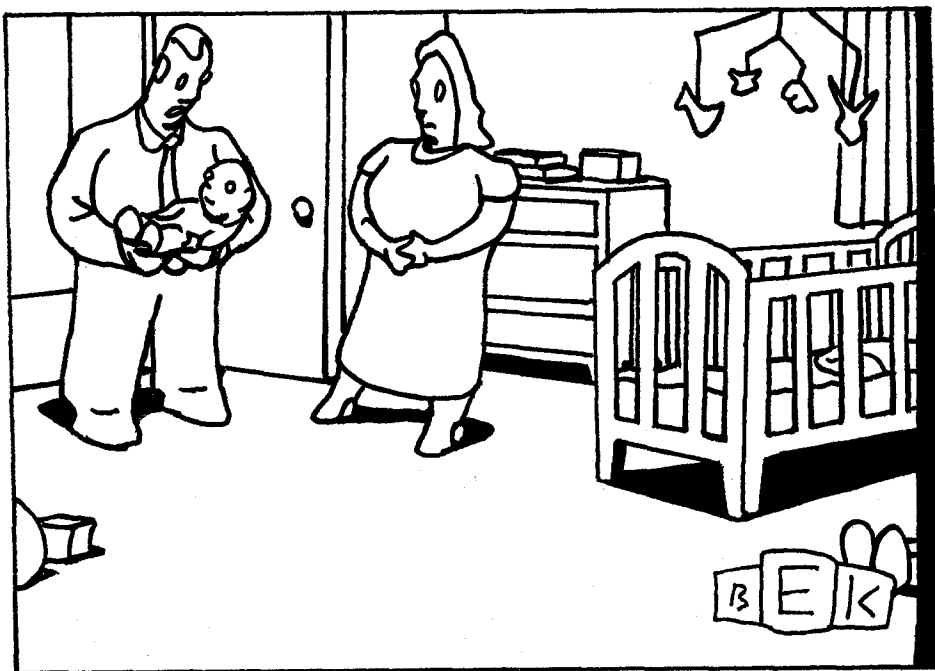
"I was spreading some risk around, and apparently it all wound up in your portfolio."



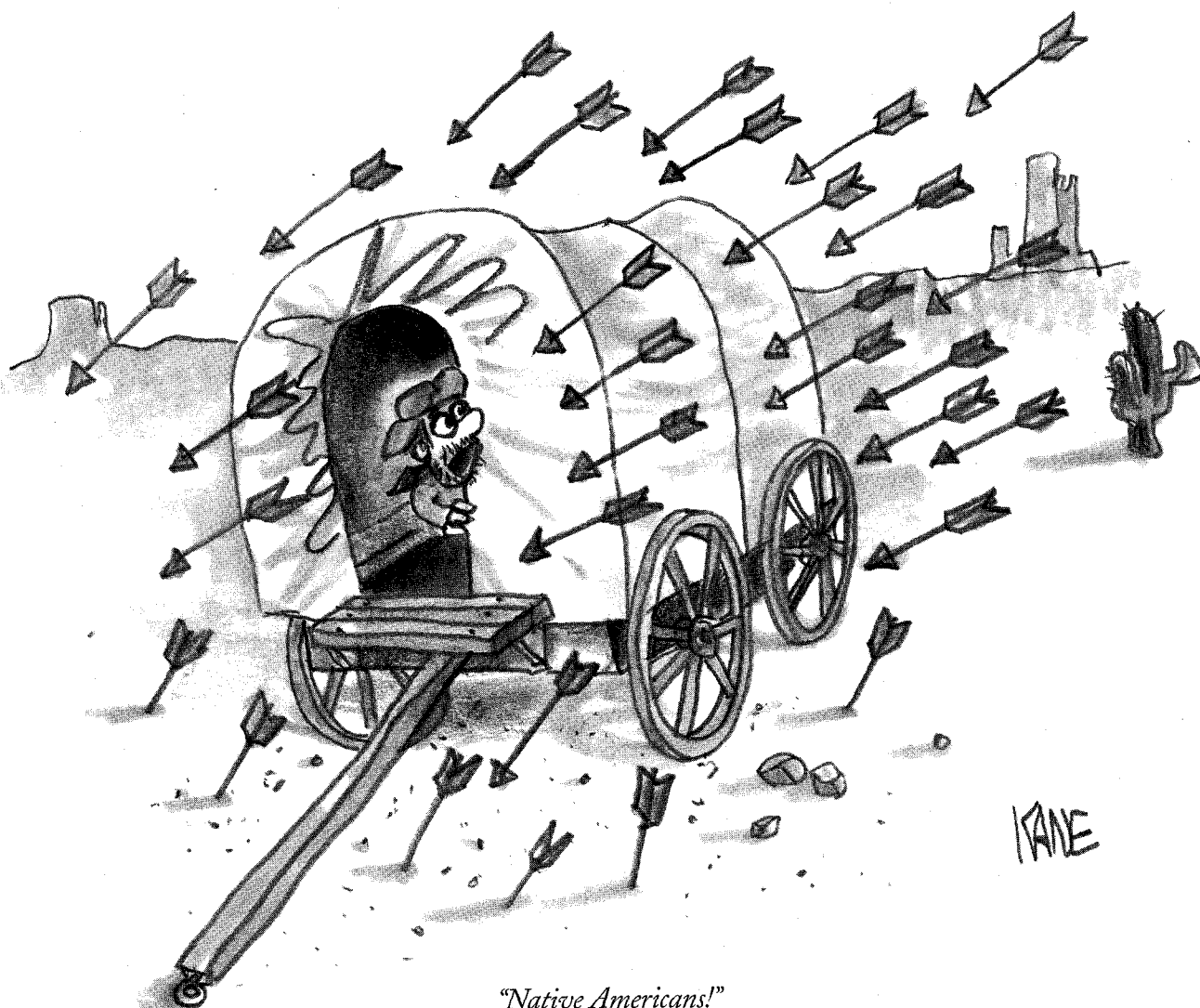
"And now a little number that asks the musical question 'Do you recognize this meat cleaver?'"



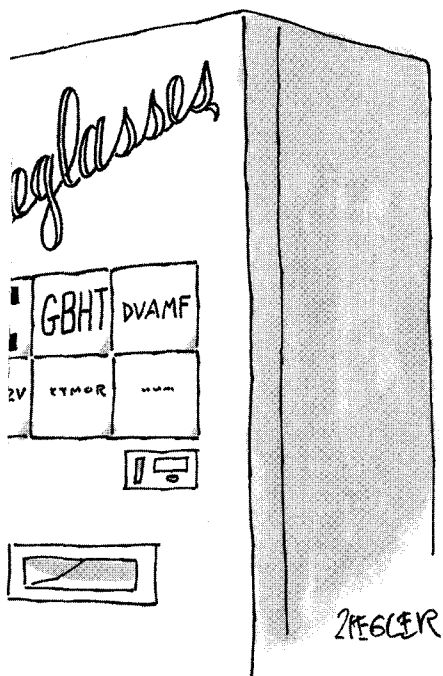
"Yes, Thelma, I heard you—you're going to turn me into a cloud of sodium ions."



"I want to deprive him of all the things I had too much of."



"Native Americans!"



"Perhaps your performance anxiety wouldn't be so bad if you performed better."

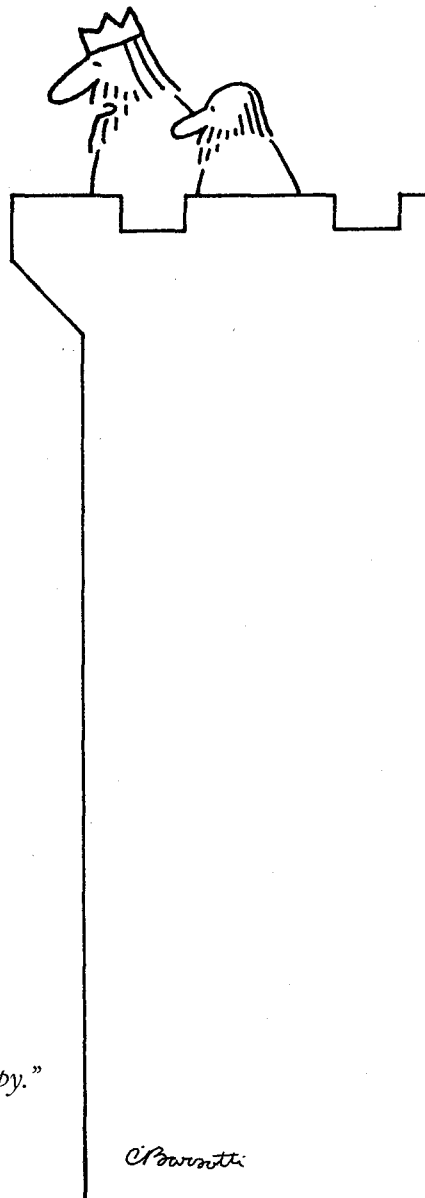


"Of course, I want your keys, too, Papi. How the hell else am I supposed to get back to Old Saybrook?"



SIPRESS

"I'm a religious nut."



"They look happy."

C. Brown



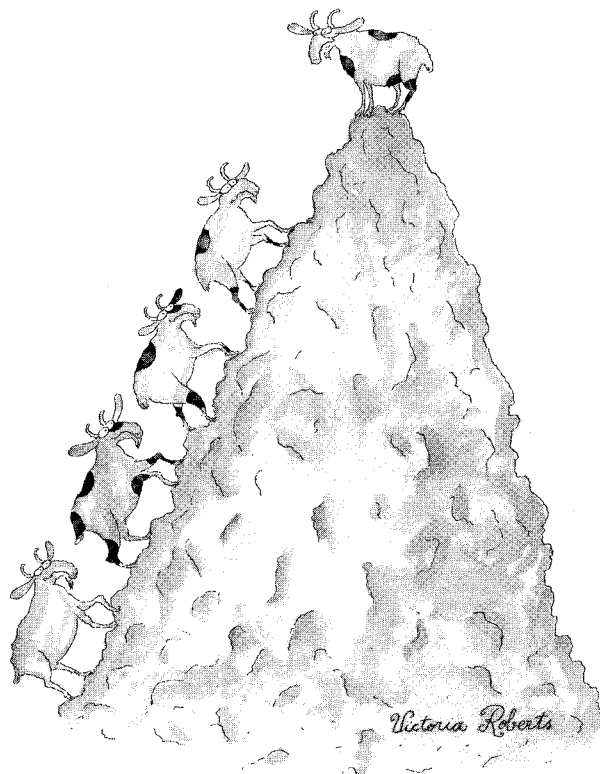
"Bob was raised in the wilderness by salmon."



WHITE-COLLAR PRISON

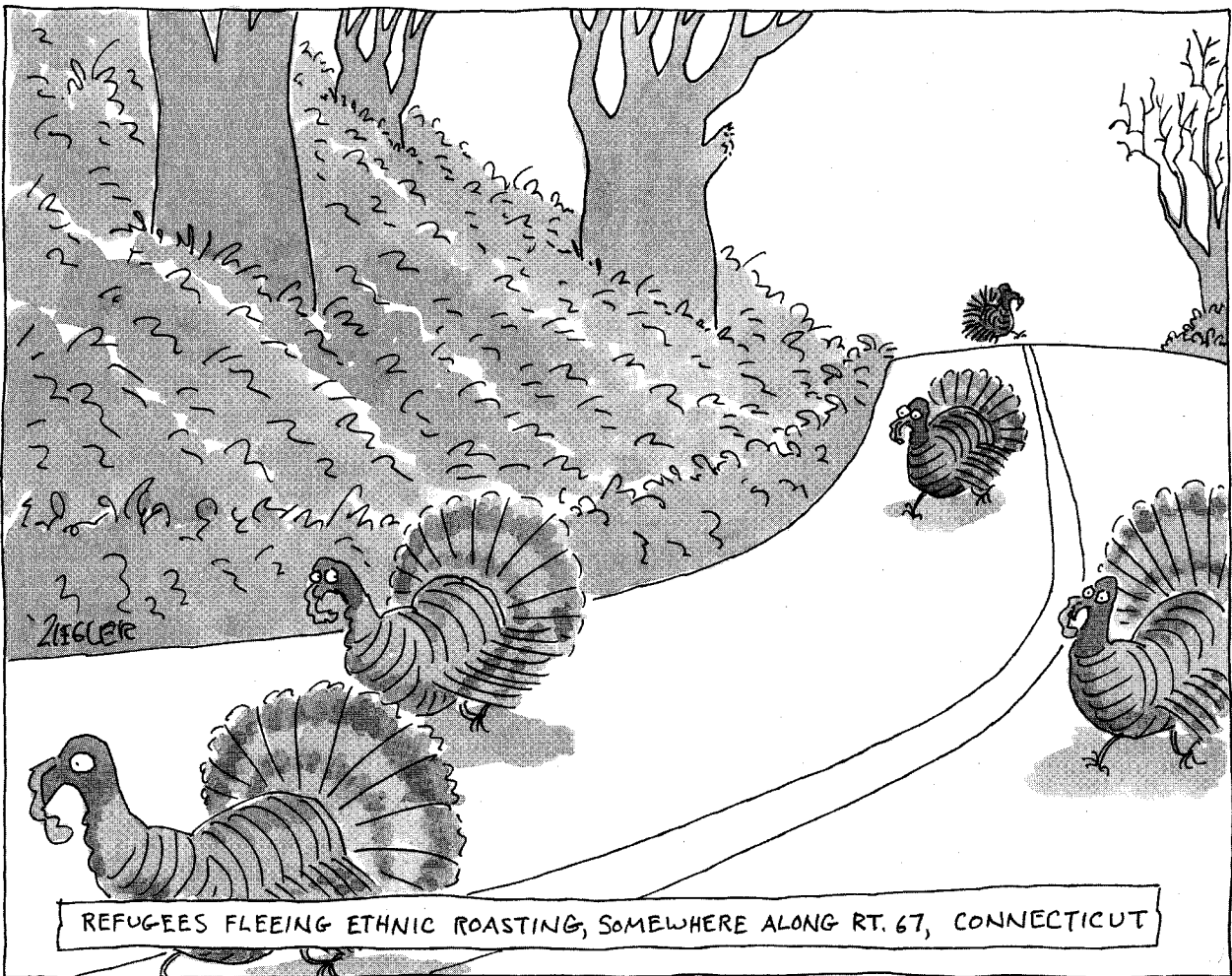


*"The lime-green vest is a little much, and the shoes—
good Lord, those are women's shoes!"*

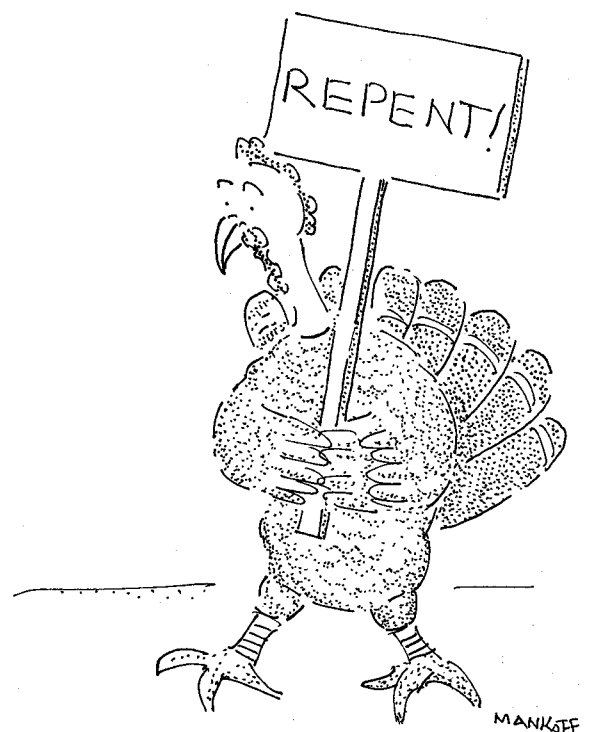


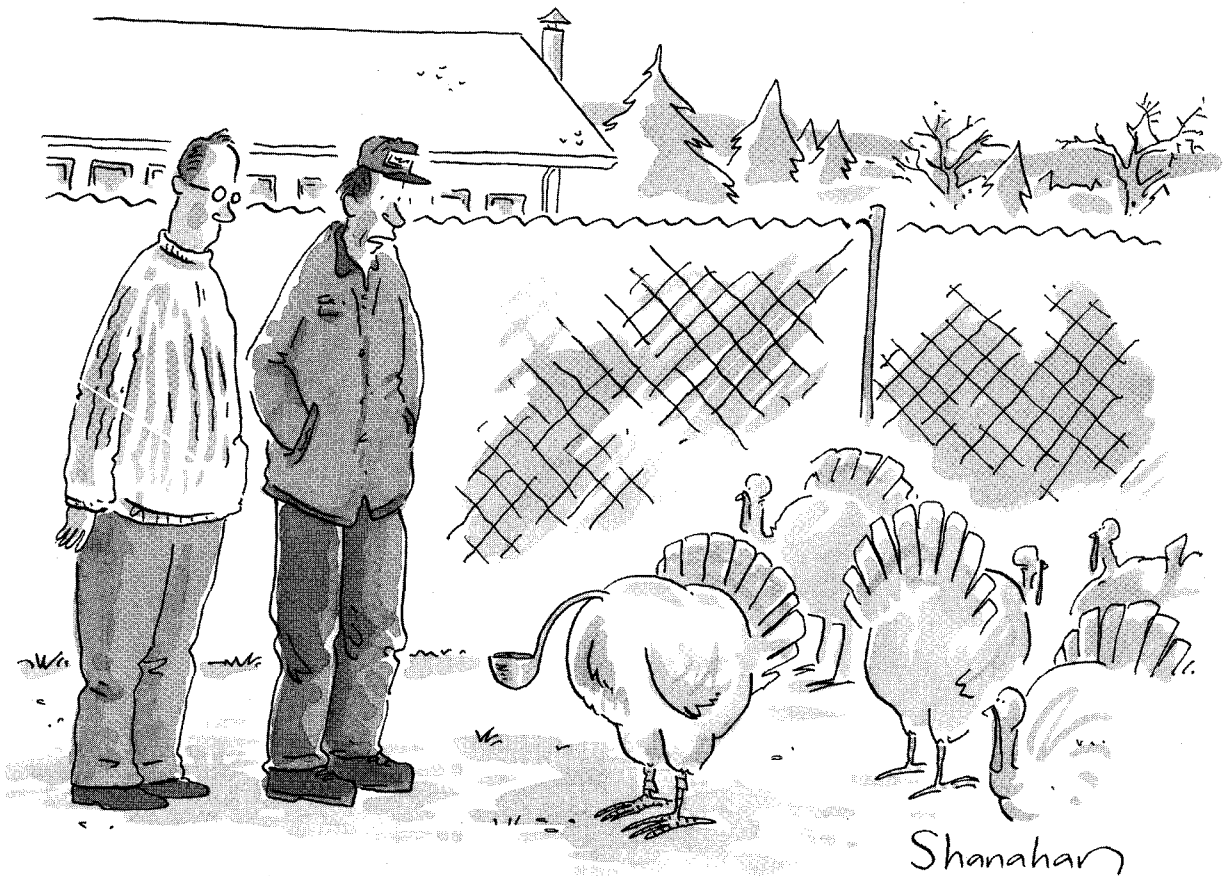
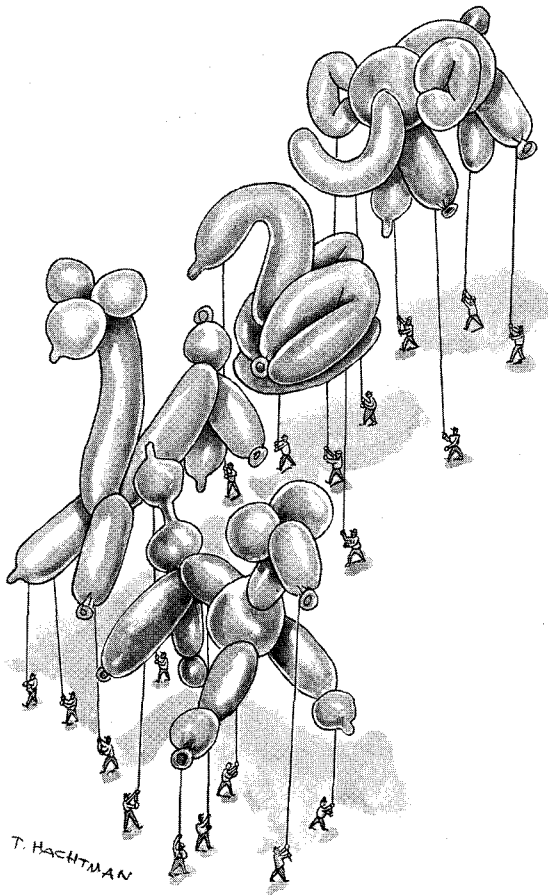
*"I hate to break it to you guys, but it's kinda the
same up here as it is down there."*

FAIR GAME



"Oh, I get it—it's the old good-Pilgrim, bad-Pilgrim routine."





"This one's self-basting."

BETTER THAN CHEKHOV

Let's say you want to write a short story. You know a few things:

- ① It has to be really great. At least as good as Chekhov, preferably better.
- ② It must contain the whole of human experience within its few masterful pages
- ③ Critics must call it "a beautifully crafted gem," or, simply, "luminous."



Now your only problem is what to write about. You start writing and immediately realize: forget Chekhov. You're not even fit to write cereal-box copy. But don't despair!

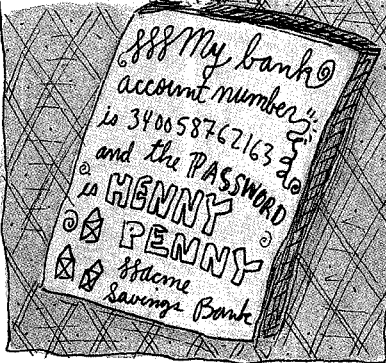
All you need to do is get hold of a secret resource that all writers (except you) know about: a plot book. This amazing volume contains zillions of plots and characters that you are free to use. If you've got time, you can throw in your own two cents, but you can also use them verbatim, as I did on the following pages. So say goodbye to writer's block and hello to inspiration!



Jim, lost, is convinced that everyone is trying to misdirect him.



Jim absent-mindedly doodles, unaware that he may be revealing important secrets.



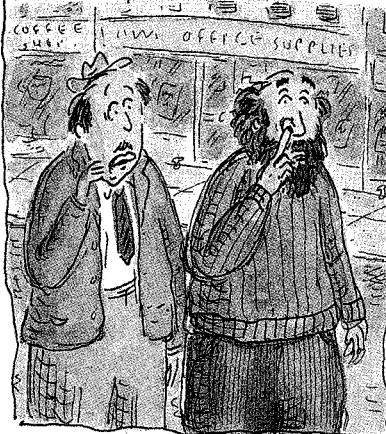
Jim forgets that he asked Brenda to marry him.



Intellectual Brenda has an artistic temperament.



Jim notices that his friend Ed has developed an unconscious habit.



Abstract sculptor Jim is commissioned to do a bust of Brenda.



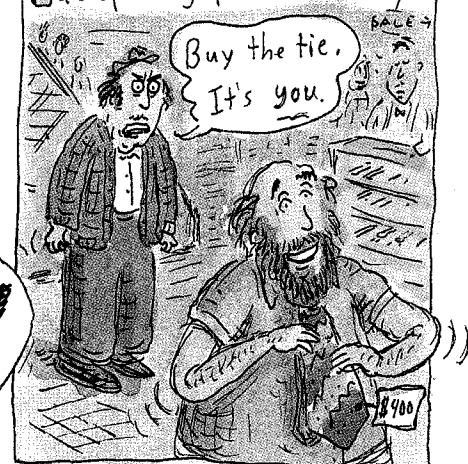
Unsophisticated **Jim** has a rival for the love of **Brenda**: **Ed**, a cultured man of the world.



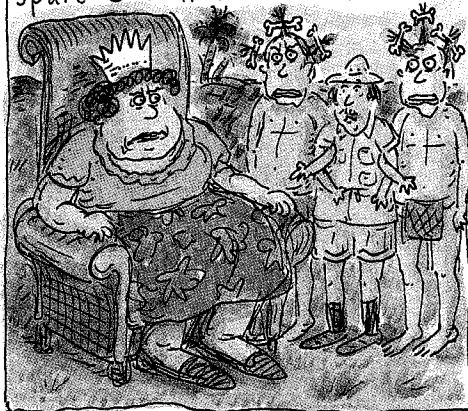
Jim picks up the wrong pair of eyeglasses.



Jim hopes to enjoy wealthy **Ed**'s spending spree vicariously.



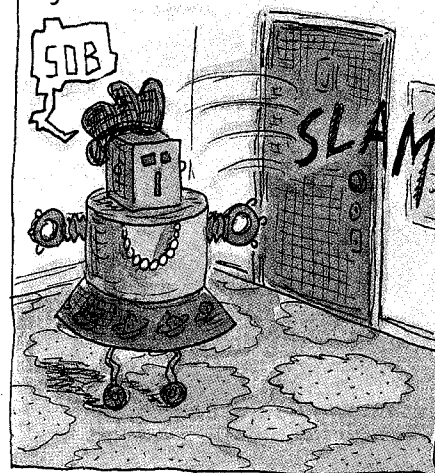
Adventurer **Jim**'s life is threatened by savages. Queen **Brenda**, the 300-pound tribal leader, agrees to spare **Jim** if he marries her.



Brenda's mother has periods of irrational behavior.



Brenda, an alien, is deserted by **Jim**, whom she loves.



Jim and **Brenda** discover that their goal is empty.



Backwoodsman **Jim** pursues an enemy to a large city.



Brenda, tipsy with champagne, ties a ribbon to the doorknob of her hotel room so she can find her way back.



Dentist **Jim**, drowning in suburbia, is desperate for adventure.



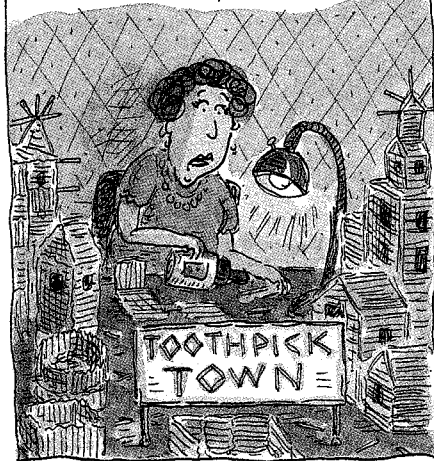
Brenda loves **Jim**, but **Jim** avoids her because he believes she is a disciple of Satan.



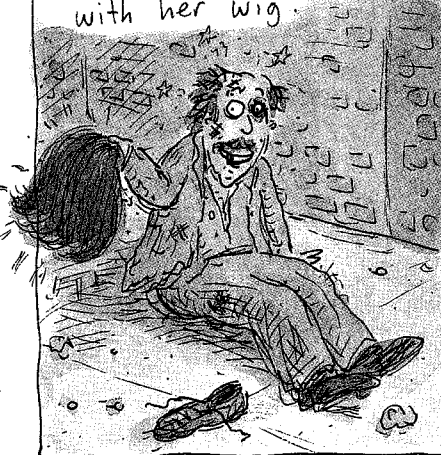
Jim's friend **Ed**, berserk from eating the fruit of a strange plant, tries to kill **Jim**.



Brenda works for years on a lonely project.



Jim struggles with a female mugger and comes away with her wig.



Jim and **Ed** wander around in a desert.



Jim is injured by a horse and develops a paralyzing horse phobia.

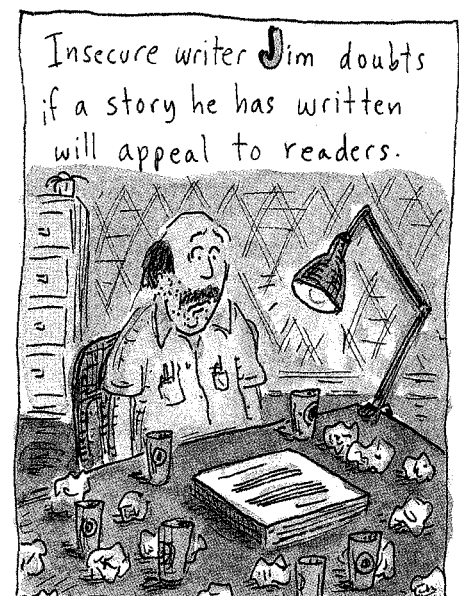
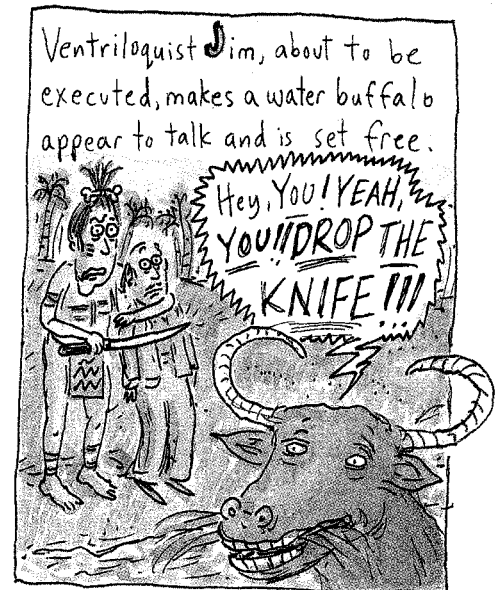


Brenda marries a much older man, **Jim**.



Televangelist **Brenda** is determined to convince the world that it is in need of her brand of religion.





R. Chart

WORLDWIDE WEBER

Robert Weber, who has just turned eighty, was born in Los Angeles. After the Second World War, in which he served on a gunboat in the South Pacific, he came to New York to work in fashion illustration and advertising. In 1962, when he was thirty-eight, he finally figured out what he was really supposed to do. That was the year he began contributing to *The New Yorker*, and today, more than fourteen hundred cartoons later, he's still at it. His understated style, with its wonderfully economical mastery of facial expression, its beautiful charcoal work, and its affectionate sympathy for the characters he draws even as he skewers them, remains as satisfying as ever.



"You did this to me."



*"Relax, Senator. We'll let you know
when it's time to be like that."*

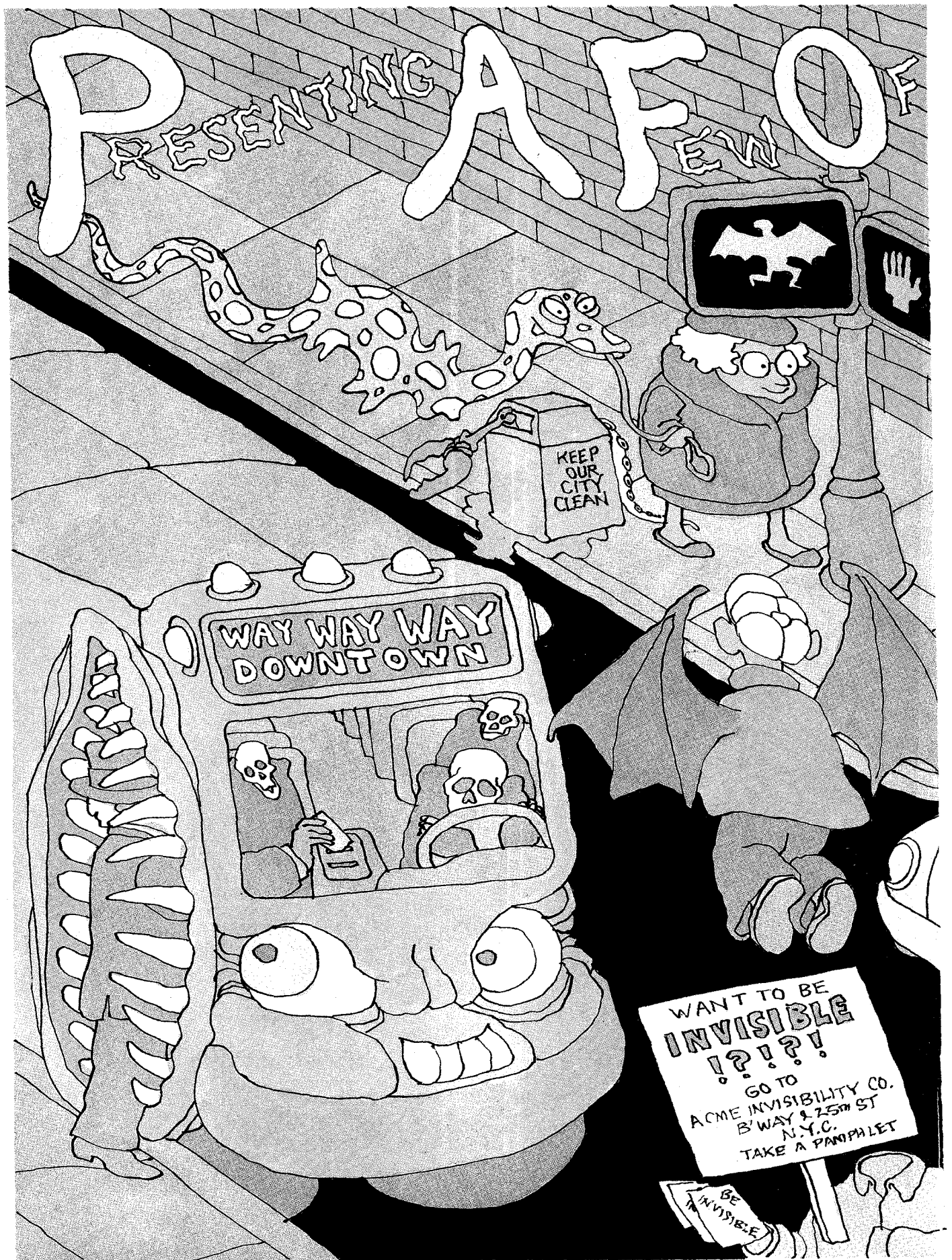


"Did we tell you? Debbie's going to be on 'Car Talk.'"



"I'm the writer-in-residence."

"Poor thing. All she knows is war."





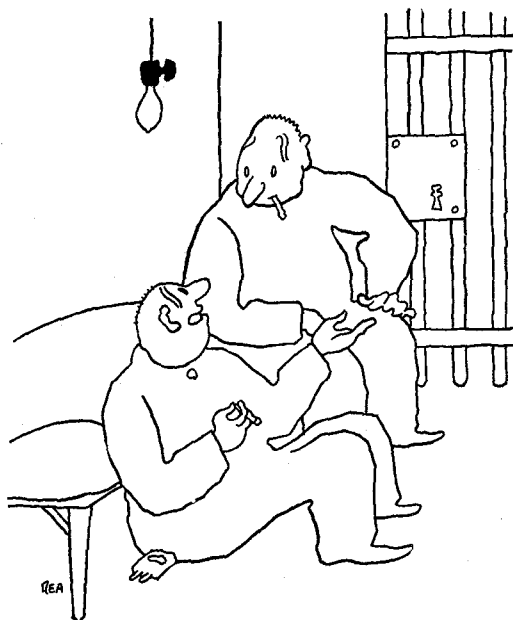
PICTURE THIS

In a cartoon caption, the words are everything. In this acrostic puzzle, there's something missing from everything; namely, one word from the caption of each of these nine cartoons. Completing the captions and matching the numbered letters will help you fill in the quotation below, which relates to the business of cartoons. And, once you've got going, you can work backward from the quotation to the captions. The solution will be printed in next week's issue.



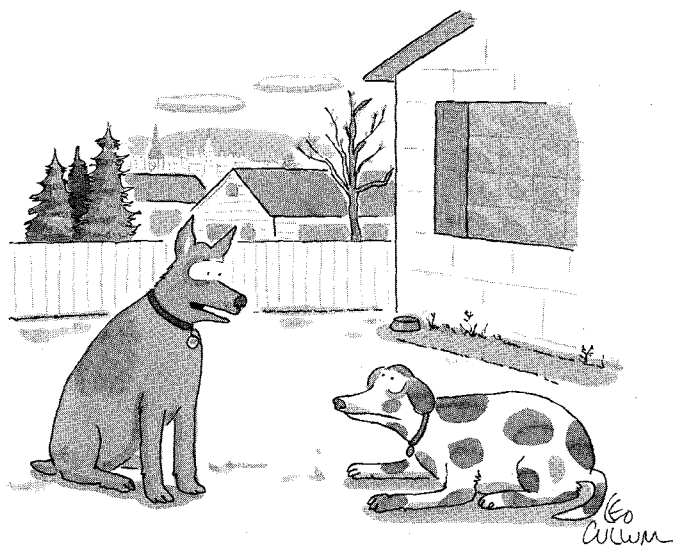
"Hey, what if marriages had term _____?"
33 6 52 9 55 42

"
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16
17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32
33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49
50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61
"



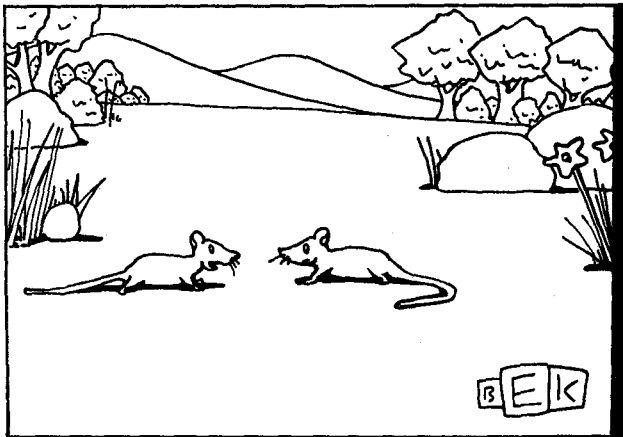
"And then, to make a long story short, I thoughtlessly put a return
on the ransom note."

4 17 24 58 34 10 54



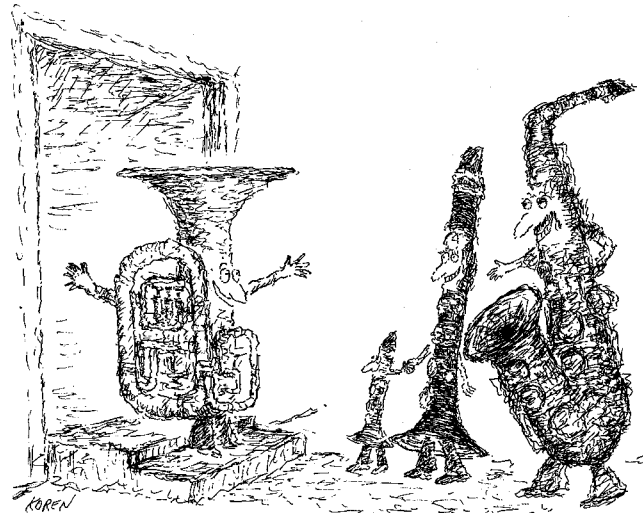
"I can't explain it. I see that guy coming up the walkway
and I go _____."

45 25 16 30 19 37



"I hear the streets are paved with

21 44 3 59 14 8 36



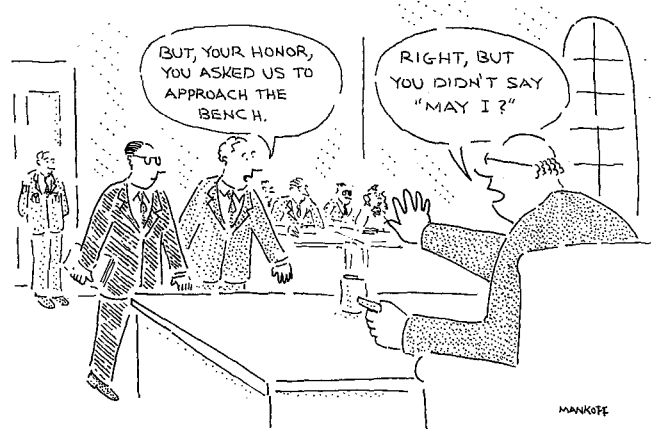
"Ah! It's the _____ family!"

26 38 29 2 13 40 49 23



"Oh, how very _____."

39 18 53 27 43 56

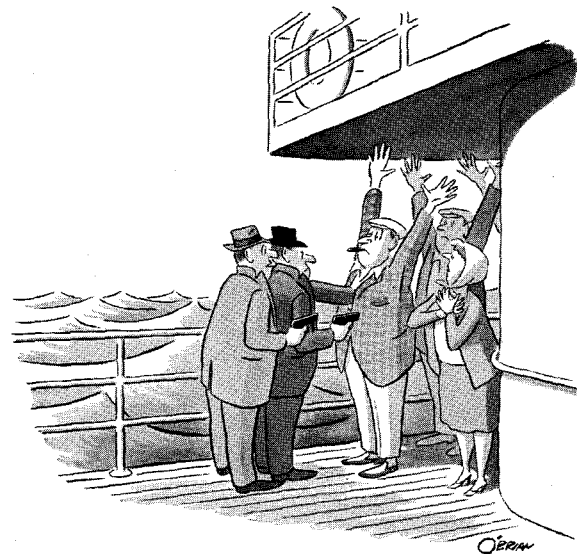
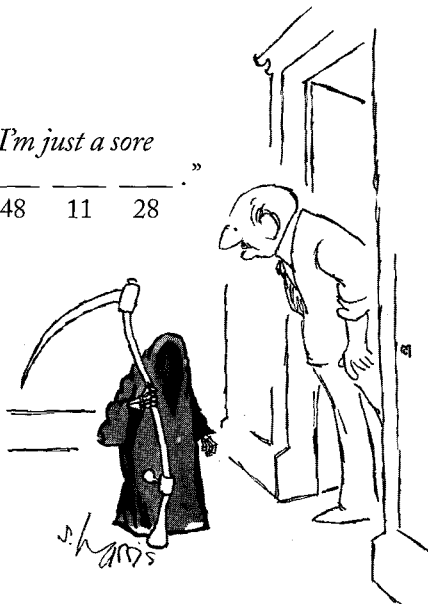


Court

50 57 35 22 7 47 12 32

"Don't panic. I'm just a sore

41 31 61 48 11 28

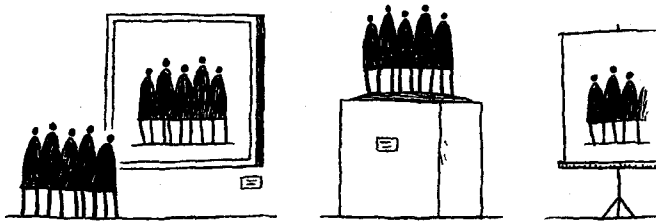


"Once again I'm asking you. How are we going to make our _____?"

20 60 46 1 5 51 15

ROBERTS, 6/4/01; REA, 11/24/45; CULLUM, 12/12/98; KAPLAN, 2/22-3/1/99; KOREN, 5/31/76; MILLER, 7/6/98; MANKOFF, 10/12/92; HARRIS, 1/5/76; O'BRIAN, 6/8/63

THE CRITICS



A CRITIC AT LARGE

THE HITMAKER

Or, The Man Who Came to Broadway.

BY ROBERT GOTTLIEB

George S. Kaufman, a founding wit of the Algonquin Round Table and probably the greatest hitmaker in Broadway history—"You Can't Take It with You," "The Man Who Came to Dinner," "Of Thee I Sing," and a score more—is currently being celebrated, or, you might say, exhumed, by the Library of America, in a volume of nine plays called "Kaufman & Co." (\$35). Why "& Co."? Because Kaufman (he pronounced it "Koffman") was the American theatre's busiest collaborator: of the dozens of straight plays he wrote, only one—"The Butter and Egg Man"—was by him solo. Presumably, he did it to show that he could, but, despite its success, he went right back to working with others. To Howard Teichmann, the co-author of his last hit play, "The Solid Gold Cadillac," he wrote, "A thought on collaboration. It is marriage without sex, and subject to many vexations. But pay no attention to them, because in one respect at least it is wonderful. The total result is frequently far more than the combined abilities of two people might give you. . . . And if I don't know about collaboration who the hell does?"

There had been many collaborators before Teichmann. The first, when Kaufman was fourteen and growing up in Pittsburgh, was Irving Pichel, who was to become a Hollywood director; the play was a father-son melodrama called "The Failure." Needless to say, nothing came of it. Kaufman's first significant partner was Marc Connelly, with whom, in 1921, he wrote his first hit, "Dulcy" (the play that

made Lynn Fontanne a star), and two other hits, "Merton of the Movies" and "Beggar on Horseback." But the work habits of the two men were different, their ambitions were different, and they agreed to part company—Connelly to write "The Green Pastures," a Pulitzer Prize-winning all-black fantasy featuring "De Lawd." None of the Connelly collaborations are included in the Library of America volume, probably because none are really known today. The movies made of them, both silent and in sound, are obscure, and so the plays, rarely revived, have no recognition value for us. But "Merton" might well have been squeezed in, to flesh out the concept of "Co." And "Beggar on Horseback," a somewhat bizarre adaptation of a German Expressionist romance, if that isn't a contradiction in terms, was considered adventurous and literary in its day, and has novelty value, at least.

In 1924, Kaufman began his long working relationship with the best-selling novelist Edna Ferber ("Show Boat," "So Big," "Giant"). Theirs was a fraught friendship and collaboration. Many people thought she was in love with him, but she was physically unattractive, demanding, and aggressive—not qualities that appealed to him in women. They had three great successes together, spread out over ten years—"The Royal Family," "Dinner at Eight," and "Stage Door"—all of which we know best today through the movie versions. The latter two are considerably superior to the plays they're based on: not only does film tone down

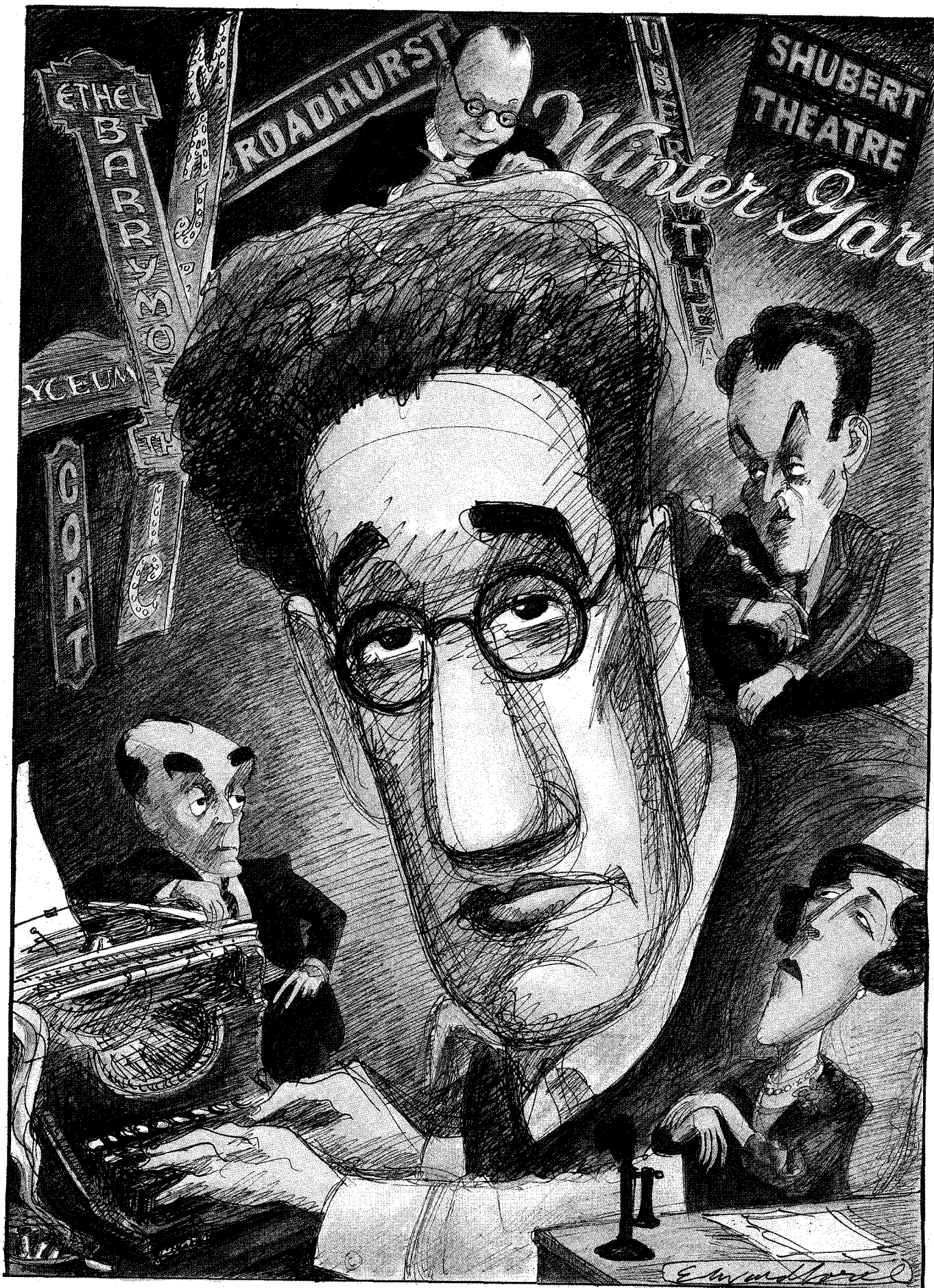
their staginess, but wouldn't you rather see Hollywood's "Dinner at Eight" cast—Jean Harlow, John and Lionel Barrymore, Wallace Beery, Billie Burke, and the sublime Marie Dressler—than the cast of some pallid revival? Ferber, caustic as usual, resented the fuss about David O. Selznick's all-star spectacular. "Very good," she commented. "I wonder who wrote it."

As for "Stage Door," the wonderful Gregory La Cava film doesn't have the luminous Margaret Sullivan repeating her stage triumph, but it does have Katharine Hepburn and Ginger Rogers in brilliant contrast, and far sharper and more amusing dialogue, a lot of it improvised. Too bad the Library of America couldn't have given us the movie script, instead of, or in addition to, the more sentimental stage version. (Ferber was incorrigibly romantic about the theatre; Kaufman was more skeptical.)

In her autobiography, "A Peculiar Treasure," Ferber downplays the tensions between the two partners, but in later years (and after two flops) Kaufman refused to have anything more to do with her. "I am an old man and not well," he wrote to her. "I have had two or three strokes already and I cannot afford another argument with you to finish my life. So I simply wish to end our friendship." Eventually they made up, and, shortly before he died, she visited his sickbed. He barely responded to her presence, but as she left the apartment she heard him calling, "Edna! Edna, come back here." When she rushed into the bedroom, he was sitting up and alert. "Edna," he asked, "are you going to the funeral?" "What funeral?" "Yours. You're dead, Edna, dead!" And fell back onto his pillows. This macabre incident hardly suggests that Kaufman was deeply invested in their reconciliation.

And then there were the Marx Brothers. "The Cocoanuts" and "Animal Crackers" were the only two shows that Kaufman wrote specifically for stars, and, since the boys were constantly changing lines and stage business, they amounted to (unwelcome) collaborators. As Alexander Woollcott put it, the Marxes were "inclined to get out of any vehicle and carry it instead." Backstage at "The Cocoanuts" one night, Kaufman irritated his pal Heywood Brown by interrupting him in the middle of a story. "Well, I had

EDWARD SOREL



George S. Kaufman was the American theatre's busiest collaborator. Of the dozens of plays he wrote, only one was by him solo.

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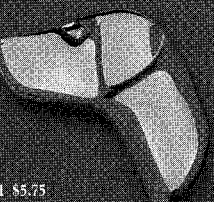
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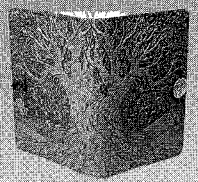
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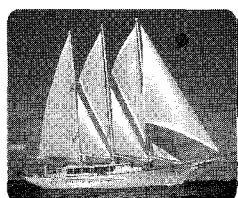


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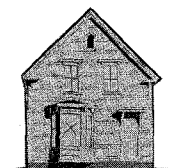
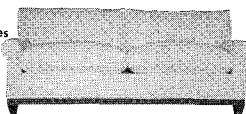
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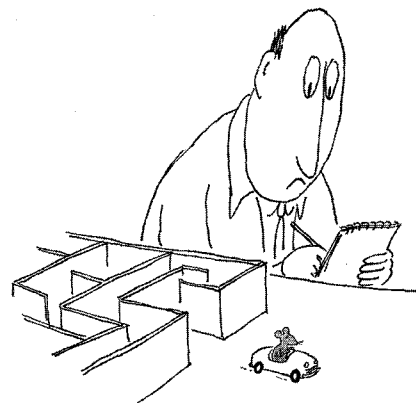
to," Kaufman apologized. "I thought I heard one of the original lines of the show." Working with the Marxes was hell all the way—at the first reading of the "Cocoanuts" script, Harpo and Chico fell asleep. Besides, Kaufman said, "how can you write for Harpo? What do you put down on paper? All you can say is 'Harpo enters,' and then he's on his own."

Oddly, though, the work he did for the Bros. holds up better than some of his more highly praised, conventional comedies. He doesn't fight their anarchic spirit but reaches out to it. The stage business is appropriately demented, the dialogue for Groucho is echt Groucho. "You want ice water in Room 202? I'll send up an onion. That'll make your ice water." And Groucho's ad-libs became an added attraction—playgoers kept coming back to see what he'd pull next. One night, with President Coolidge in the audience, he stopped the show: "Isn't it a little bit past your bedtime, Cal?" But, despite the liberties he took with the script, Groucho knew what he had in Kaufman. "Kaufman molded me," he said. "Kaufman gave me the walk and the talk." You could make a case for Groucho being George S. Kaufman's most lasting contribution to posterity.

Kaufman's assistant on "The Cocoanuts" was Morrie Ryskind, who was also involved in his other Marx Brothers projects, including the script for "A Night at the Opera." More important, he was the co-author of "Of Thee I Sing," the 1931 satirical musical about politics that not only became a smash hit but was the first musical to be awarded a Pulitzer Prize. Produced at the height of the Depression, "Of Thee I Sing," with a gleeful score by the Gershwins, was something totally new on Broadway—unless you count its obvious debt to Gilbert and Sullivan. The hero is John P. Wintergreen—"Wintergreen for President! / Wintergreen for President! / He's the man the people choose; / Loves the Irish and the Jews"—who gets elected on a platform of Love: "Love is sweeping the country; / Waves are hugging the shore; / All the sexes / From Maine to Texas / Have never known such love before." It's all breezy fun, with Kaufman's chief target the utter pointlessness of America's Vice-President, in this case the bumbling but adorable Alexander Throttlebottom. (Where is he, now that we need him?)

The Supreme Court, beauty contests, and "Ze French" also come in for gentle ribbing, but the satire, like all of Kaufman's, is good-natured: it's not that he pulls his punches but that there *are* no punches, just featherweight jabs. The ferocious bite of a true satirist—a Molière, a Swift, a Twain (Kaufman's hero)—is absent from his work, reserved for his famous put-downs at the expense of private victims.

The most important collaboration, of course, was that with Moss Hart, which began, in 1930, with "Once in a Lifetime"—a satirical take on Hollywood—and went on to the two biggest hits of Kaufman's career, "You Can't Take It with You," which ran for two years and won him a second Pulitzer, and "The Man Who Came to Dinner," based on the shenanigans of his great pal Alexander Woollcott. "You Can't Take It with You" is deservedly the best known of Kaufman's plays, frequently revived and still enjoyable. What sets it apart is that the characters, however calculated their zaniness, seem human, not stick figures cracking wise. Frank Capra's film version (which won the Best Picture Oscar for 1938) is how we know it best, and, unless you're irredeemably anti-Capra, you can't help falling for Jean Arthur, James Stewart, Edward Arnold, Spring Byington, Ann Miller, and the other residents and visitors at the house of Grandpa Vanderhof—Lionel Barrymore, in one of his typical smarmy-gnarly impersonations. The message is pure Capra, but it's also pure Kaufman: naïve goofballs outfox greedy business types; money is the root of all evil; don't waste your life on congenial hard work. Instead, take up the xylophone, make fireworks (or fudge), take ballet lessons from impoverished comic Russians, write silly plays. It's the theme



of a lot of Depression-era movies: perhaps it provided comfort to people who had already stopped doing uncongenial hard work because they'd lost their jobs.

"The Man Who Came to Dinner" is closer to the typical Kaufman farce, but it stands out because of the fun of its awful hero, Sheridan Whiteside, who not only was based on the famous Woolcott but was played by him for a few weeks in a West Coast production. The idea is simple but immediately engaging. The great Whiteside, lecturing in a small Ohio town, fractures his hip and is laid up for weeks in the home of the despairing couple who have had him to dinner, and whose crime is that they're ordinary middle-class Midwesterners. Indulging himself in every petty tyranny, Whiteside disrupts their lives—undermining their authority with their children, tormenting his nurse and doctor, commandeering the phone, offending anyone in earshot with a barrage of insults. Celebrity friends turn up to amuse him—barely disguised replicas of Harpo ("Banjo"), Gertrude Lawrence, Noël Coward. And then he reveals his good heart by promoting the romance of his acerbic secretary with an idealistic young journalist, after having done his selfish best to gum it up. As usual, Kaufman draws back from the kill. (Try to avoid the disastrous Warner Bros. version, which gives us Bette Davis bravely coping with finding herself in a comedy.)

Kaufman and Hart had another hit with "I'd Rather Be Right," in which the incomparable George M. Cohan returned to the stage to play F.D.R. (whom he loathed) in a fanciful romance set in Central Park and featuring the usual Kaufman bland young couple and, again, the Supreme Court—apparently an irresistible target in the New Deal era. The Library of America editors don't make the mistake of including it in their collection.

Hart went his own way after a perfunctory 1940 farce called "George Washington Slept Here" failed to do very well, but the two men remained intimate friends for life—the much younger Hart the closest thing to a son the older man ever had. Kaufman, who had enjoyed more than a score of hits in a score of years, now experienced an almost unbroken series of failures. In the next twenty years, the only successful shows he wrote were an adaptation of John P.

Marquand's "The Late George Apley"; "The Solid Gold Cadillac"; and the Cole Porter musical "Silk Stockings." Hart's career accelerated: "Lady in the Dark," "Winged Victory," the scripts for "Gentleman's Agreement" and the Judy Garland "A Star Is Born," and the direction of both "My Fair Lady" and "Camelot." But his most lasting work is the memoir "Act One," a tremendous best-seller in 1959, which recounts his long and painful apprenticeship in the theatre, climaxed by the triumph of that first collaboration with Kaufman, "Once in a Lifetime." Hart had written a promising play, but the amount of work needed to turn it into a success was staggering, and more than once the venture nearly foundered. Hart, the ardent neophyte, was in awe of his new partner, the most successful man on Broadway, and he provides us with our closest look at the way Kaufman approached his work:

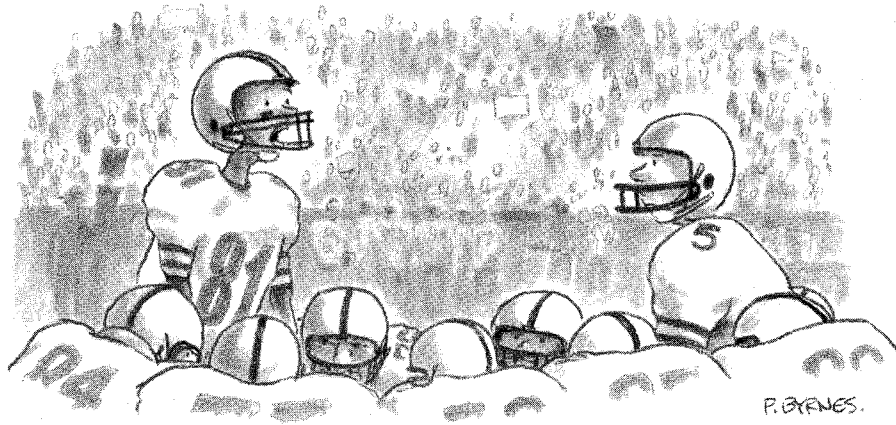
There was an element of the demoniacal in his tireless search for just the right word to round a sentence into its proper unity, for the exact juxtaposition of words and movement that would slyly lead the audience along the periphery of a scene to its turning point and then propel them effortlessly to its climax. . . . No moment, however small, seemed unimportant enough to escape his almost fierce attention, and his grasp of the play's latent values was immediate and complete. My eyes and ears were opened anew each day to the thousand-and-one endless details that go to make up the subtle and infinitely fragile clockwork of a play's interior mechanism, and to the slow cultivation of its subsoil that gradually makes it blossom into something vital and alive. I watched and listened with the consecration of a yogi.

"Clockwork," "mechanism"—the words can be applied to the entire Kaufman oeuvre. But these are not the inexorable, subversive mechanisms of the farces of Feydeau, whose riotous chain reactions lead to berserk confusions that turn the bourgeois world upside down; they're maneuvers calculated to please and, finally, comfort a very different bourgeois world, the world of Broadway. Kaufman's ruling impulse, always, is to succeed, to win, not to impose his mordant view of life.

Winning was crucial to Kaufman not only in the theatre but at croquet, his one sport, and bridge, his chief hobby, which he played at a near-expert level. "I'd rather be a poor winner than any kind of loser," he once acknowledged—or boasted. And he always had to be in control, which is no doubt why, starting

Washington
Apples
From
Nevada?





"But what if that guy in the bleachers is right? What if I do suck?"

in 1929, with "June Moon," the one play he wrote with Ring Lardner, he preferred to direct his own work. (He had already started directing the work of other playwrights: the string of hit shows he staged runs from "The Front Page," in 1928, to "Romanoff and Juliet," in 1957, by way of "My Sister Eileen" and "Guys and Dolls.")

The seeds of his compulsion to control and to succeed, and of others of his more disturbing characteristics, lie in a difficult childhood. The Kaufmans were relatively well-off German Jews in the Pittsburgh of 1889, the year George was born. His father was a good-natured businessman who kept changing businesses—whenever something was panning out, he got bored and moved on. His mother was both arrogant and severely neurotic. For most of her adult life, she was beset by frenzied jealousies and imaginary illnesses leading to wildly dramatic deathbed scenes; nurses—eventually, psychiatric ones—were kept on hand to deal with her. Her husband responded by just leaving the house when things got bad: "Nettie, I'm going out for a walk. I'll be home when you get back to your senses." George had an older and a younger sister, but the sibling who affected him most powerfully was an older brother who had died as a baby. It was this tragic death, exacerbating her intense hypochondria, that led Mrs. Kaufman to the extreme measures she took to protect little Georgie. No milk—milk could make children sick. All water to be boiled. No rough games. And, especially, no

close contact with others, since others could transmit disease. Georgie grew up painfully thin, painfully shy, and painfully unconfident of his abilities.

By the time he was an adult, he had become the victim of countless phobias—constantly washing his hands, compulsively picking up real or imagined lint from the floor, and so frightened of death that sometimes he wouldn't go to bed for fear of dying in his sleep. As for contact with others, he couldn't bear to be touched: no handshakes, even. A famous story involves one of his innumerable girlfriends, who made the mistake at dinner one night of tasting his soup with her spoon, at which he immediately sent for a new bowl. Later, when he was kissing her, she remarked, "I see. You're not so worried about my germs now." "I've been looking at you all evening," he replied, "and I've decided it's worth the risk."

His sexual history was peculiar from the start. In 1905, when he was sixteen, he and six other boys signed a pact to remain pure until they married—they called it the Black and White Club, because they had set down their vow in black-and-white. It seems that they all kept their word: certainly, Kaufman was a virgin when, at the age of twenty-seven, he married Beatrice Bakrow. And when, the next year, Beatrice had a still-born child, Kaufman was so disturbed that he was never able to resume sexual relations with her. In due course, although they remained dependent on each other, adopted a baby, and obviously cared for each other deeply, they went their separate sexual ways.

Kaufman, in fact, became known for the number of women he took to bed, with some of whom he maintained affairs for years (while enjoying other adventures) and with all of whom he remained on good terms. For a man who abhorred physical contact, he managed to rack up a good deal of it. In 1936, to his horror—and to the amazement, and relish, of the general public—he became notorious as a lover when the diaries of the beautiful movie star Mary Astor became public during an acrimonious divorce proceeding. We'll never know whether some of the entries that were printed were forged, whether they were really written in purple ink (or was it lavender? or violet?), whether there were really "many exquisite moments . . . twenty—count them, diary, twenty. . . I don't see how he does it." We do know that it all exploded into scandal, and that Kaufman had to slip out of Los Angeles to avoid having to appear in court. The two top headlines in the New York Times of August 11, 1936, were "CORN CROP WORST SINCE '81" and "WARRANT OUT FOR KAUFMAN." The staunch Beatrice stood by him: "We have been married twenty years. We are adults, leading our lives in adult fashion. George is a good husband. I love him very much. He is in love with me despite the things that may have happened. . . . She kept a diary. Very stupid, that."

Beatrice Kaufman was as formidable a figure as her husband. She had done clever work as a press agent, a script reader, a book editor, but it was her style, her intelligence, her judgment that drew people to her. In 1928, this magazine published a hilarious Profile of her by Ring Lardner. ("It is her modest boast that she is never seen in the same costume twice and generally not even once.") This ran almost a year before the magazine got around to her husband, with Woolcott doing the honors. By then, the Round Table at the Algonquin had secured its relentless grip on the public imagination, and Kaufman, Woolcott, Robert Benchley, Dorothy Parker, Harpo, the Lunts, *The New Yorker's* Harold Ross, and other current demigods were indulging themselves at lunch while slicing each other up. Typical: Kaufman, responding to a mock-anti-Semitic remark that the half-Jewish Parker was studiously ignoring, stood up and announced, "I've had enough slurs on my race. I am now leav-

Champagne Not From Champagne?

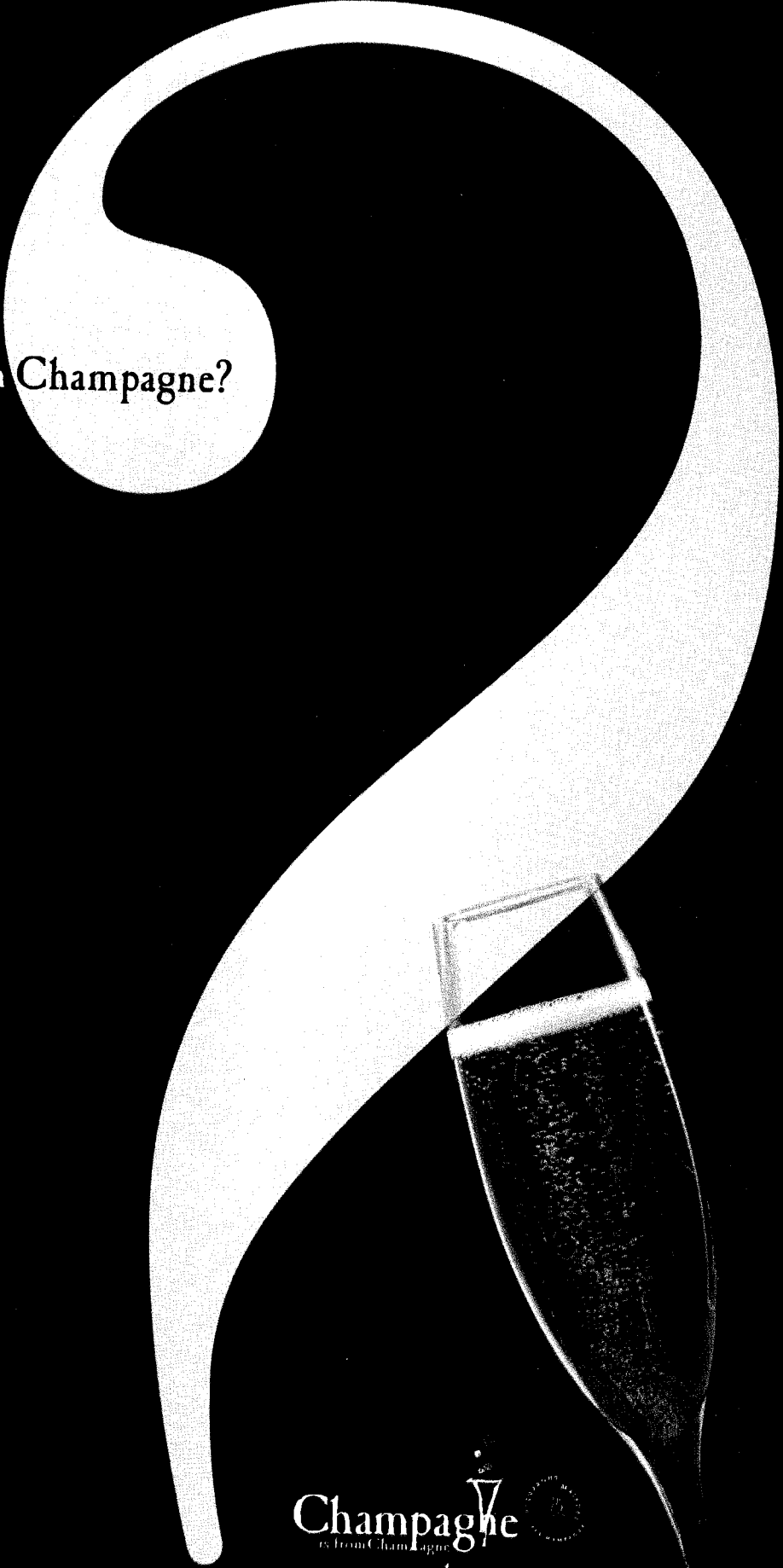
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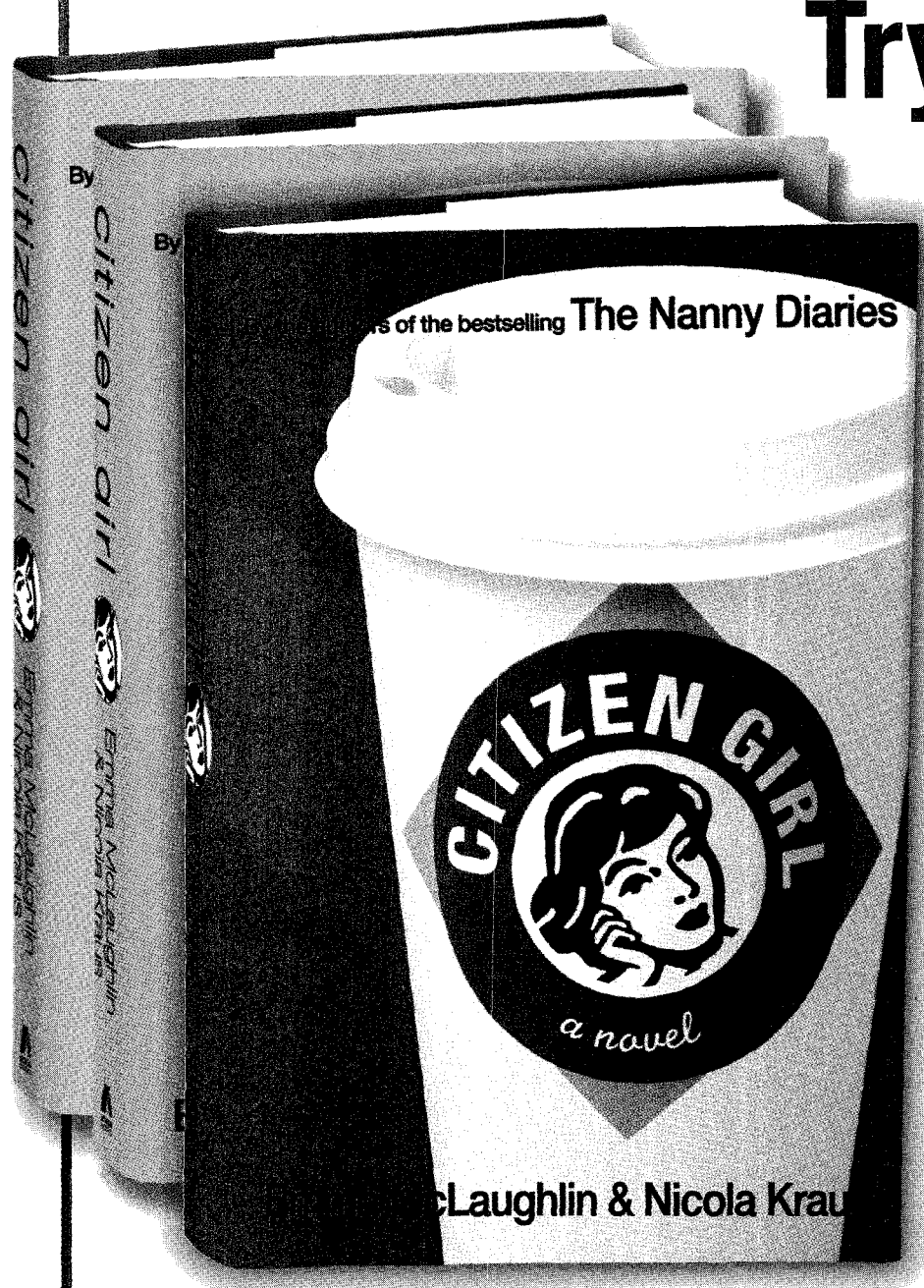


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they all left something here, a sign, a house,
like a man who seeks to return to a beloved place
and purposely forgets a book, a basket, a pair of glasses,
so that he will have an excuse to come back to the beloved place.
In the same way we leave things here.
In the same way the dead leave us.

—Yehuda Amichai

(Translated, from the Hebrew, by Leon Wieseltier.)

ing this table, this dining room, and this hotel. And I trust that Mrs. Parker will walk out with me—halfway.”

Humor had been Kaufman’s entrée into the great world. After a half-baked education and some stabs at ordinary jobs (ribbon salesman was one), he began sending comments to the immensely popular column put together for the *Evening Mail* by Franklin Pierce Adams—F.P.A. to the world. Adams was impressed, and found young Kaufman a column of his own, on the Washington *Times*, which lasted until the owner spotted him one day and demanded to know “What is that Jew doing in my city room?” With that, Kaufman’s career in Washington was over, but, with the help of fairy-godfather F.P.A., he was absorbed into the world of New York journalism, and ended up running the theatre desk at the *Times*, a job he clung to for years after he became a successful playwright. It was a safety blanket—security against the disaster he was always certain was about to strike. His opening-night anxieties went well beyond the norm. After the curtain came down on one rollickingly triumphant première, the leading actor found him slumped against a wall “looking a little like the late Marie Antoinette in the tumbrel.”

This complicated, tormented man, who talked aloud to himself in the street, was generally silent in company until,

suddenly, he would spring one of those famous put-downs. In Palm Springs one day, Moss Hart turned up in ludicrously elaborate Western garb, from expensive Texas boots to twenty-gallon Stetson. One look was all Kaufman needed to greet him with “Hi-yo, Platinum.” When Hart bought a country estate in Bucks County, near the Kaufmans’, and rebuilt and reforested it, Kaufman remarked, “This is what God could have done if He’d had money.” When an inept bridge partner got up to go to the men’s room, Kaufman snapped, “Fine. This is the first time this afternoon I’ll know what you have in your hand.” And so on. These quips, in the heyday of the Round Table, were passed around and savored, like Dorothy Parker’s. They’re still funny, but they lack the pure brilliance of Oscar Wilde’s; and, unlike Wilde’s, they were often meant to wound.

But if Kaufman could, on occasion, be brutal, he was consistently warm and attentive to his family, to Bea’s family, to his daughter, Anne. And though he rarely allowed familiarities, and fled from any kind of sentimental gesture or utterance, he was secretly generous to friends and acquaintances down on their luck. Similarly, although he constantly fretted about money and knew how to cut a deal, he was known in the business for his absolute integrity and fairness, both in financial matters and in matters of billing.

His policy was simple: whichever collaborator came up with the idea for the play was billed first. Thus, “Dinner at Eight” is by Kaufman and Ferber, while “Stage Door” is by Ferber and Kaufman. On the opening night of “Once in a Lifetime,” as the applause rolled in, he stepped forward during the curtain calls—he was appearing in the play—and, breaking an iron-clad rule of his, made an opening-night speech. It wasn’t long: “I would like the audience to know that eighty per cent of this play is Moss Hart.”

When Beatrice suddenly died, in 1945, Kaufman was undone. “I’m through,” he said. “I’ll never work again. I’m through.” But he did work again, and he married again, too, four years later. She was Leueen MacGrath, a beautiful and successful English actress many years his junior. At first, they were extremely happy—his daughter later said that these were the happiest years of his life—but the usual problems developed, and they were divorced in 1957. The divorce left them good friends, and they went on collaborating on plays, despite the fact that they had given birth to a couple of Broadway flops. But even being married to two women he loved didn’t help Kaufman express feelings in his work. As he himself acknowledged, he simply could not write a love scene—if a plot required anything resembling one, it was left to the collaborator of the moment. And he was weak on characterization. Hart humanizes him, Ferber supplies sentiment, and in “June Moon” it is clearly Ring Lardner who provides the hint of disagreeable reality that is generally absent from the other comedies.

“June Moon” gives us Fred, the typical Kaufman young rube headed for the big city with stars in his eyes and cotton between his ears. Once he hits New York as an aspiring songwriter, he encounters not only the usual Kaufman phonies who try to take him for a ride but a pair of conniving sisters, one after his money and the other cheating on her husband. This is close-to-the-bone realism for Kaufman. Of course, the sisters are eventually outmatched, Fred strikes gold with “June Moon, shining above, / Will my true love come soon? / June Moon, I am so blue; / I know that you long for her, too,” and sweet young love prevails. This is Broadway, after all.

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of young Fred in the young George of "Once in a Lifetime," who blunders into a triumph over the caricaturized moguls of Hollywood, and whose only discernible feature, apart from stupidity, is that he never stops cracking Indian nuts. You'll meet up with him again in "The Butter and Egg Man," Kaufman's solo effort about the theatre; this time around, he's young Peter, the wide-eyed sucker who learns fast and ends up outsuckering the sharpies. And here he comes again, as young Merton in "Merton of the Movies," another swipe at Hollywood, in which a total naïf (he starts out as a clerk in Gashwiler's General Store in Simsbury, Illinois) stumbles his way to stardom. Needless to say, in all these plays boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl—in other words, they're romantic comedies masquerading as satires.

When, in the more spacious collaborations with Ferber and Hart, Kaufman strays from this formula, his sure command of structure, dialogue, and pace holds everything together. But when he strikes out into serious territory, as in the 1939 patriotic pageant "The American Way," written with Hart and starring Fredric March, the results are unfortunate. We follow through the decades the lives of the Gunthers, a German immigrant couple who succeed in America and love their adopted country. At a rabble-rousing Fascist meeting, Martin Gunther as an old man speaks up ("Do not bring this madness over here! . . . Democracy is *not* finished") and is beaten to death by local goons. His funeral oration:

To Martin Gunther we pay a just homage. For it may be truly said that he was an American. He lived as an American; he died as an American. I can think of no finer epitaph. I see in the life of Martin Gunther, and even in his death, high hope for America. It will go on, this country, so long as we keep alive the thing that Martin Gunther died for. Let us keep this land of ours, which we love so dearly, a land of hope and freedom.

(A single voice starts "The Star-spangled Banner." Another joins in, then more and more, until every voice in the Square is uplifted in the national anthem. Men, women, children—their voices mount to a fervid finish.)
CURTAIN.

I'll say.

Kaufman died in 1961. In the seventies, three long biographies were published—by Howard Teichmann, Scott Meredith, and Malcolm Goldstein—on which I have drawn for the

facts of his life. These books differ in approach and tone, but they share the assumption that Kaufman was an important figure, whose work mattered. A quarter of a century later, the Library of America is making the same claim. But then the Library of America is, as its publisher, Max Rudin, recently stated in *Publishers Weekly*, "expanding what the notion of great American literature is." Is this code for dumbing down? Or are we really meant to believe that "The Royal Family" and "Animal Crackers" fulfill *anybody's* notion of what great literature is?

When I was a kid, and theatre-mad, I not only spent all my allowance on Broadway matinées but avidly read plays of the past. One of my favorites was "The Man Who Came to Dinner"; I couldn't get over the hilarity of Sheridan Whiteside's first line—"I may vomit"—or his comeback to a nervous neighbor who has brought him a jar of calf's-foot jelly: "Made from your own foot, I have no doubt." This play, unlike most of the others by "Kaufman & Co.," still has some vitality, but I no longer find myself laughing. Either I've lost my sense of humor or it has evolved. Or the world has moved on.

The easy laugh, the insistent cleverness of the plot mechanisms—the very qualities that delighted prewar Broadway—may explain why today, with the well-made play a thing of the past, Kaufman's work seems for the most part so bloodless and predictable. Even at the height of his fame, the danger was clear to some observers. In a 1939 *Time* cover story, Louis Kronenberger wrote, of Kaufman's career, "It proclaims an amazing foresight in always taking the pulse of Broadway as the clue to its heart, a habit of always writing fashionable plays and never revolutionary ones. It proclaims a playwright who has made sport of everything while never giving offense to anybody. It proclaims a really great practical theatre mind, with no philosophy except that the theatre is entertainment and that good entertainment pays."

Great literature endures, but even first-rate entertainments fade. It doesn't take away from Kaufman's genius for success or from the pleasure he provided audiences for so long that today his work reads like a footnote to literature, rather than the thing itself. ♦

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THE APPELLATION TRAIL

By Susan Breslow Sardone

"Good wine is a necessity of life for me."

— Thomas Jefferson

In July, archeologists at Historic Jamestowne unearthed what is arguably the oldest known wine cellar in America and ten seventeenth-century wine bottles. With Virginia preparing to celebrate its four-hundredth anniversary in 2007, the serendipitous find not only captivated oenophiles and historians but also put the spotlight on Virginia's wine heritage and its recent emergence as a world-class wine producer.

While those uncorked bottles may once have contained Madeira and no longer hold liquid, recent award-winning vintages are abundant throughout the state. Since the mid-seventies, the number of wineries in Virginia has, like a cork released from a champagne bottle, popped from five to eighty-seven.

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Oasis Winery, Hume
Barboursville Vineyards, Barboursville
Kluge Estate Winery, Charlottesville
Prince Michel, Leon
Chrysalis Vineyards, Middleburg
Château Morrisette, Meadows of Dan
Breaux Vineyards, Purcellville



Virginia's boutique wineries, many of them family-owned, begin outside of Washington, DC, nestle in the Blue Ridge Mountains, wind past Colonial Williamsburg and Eastern Virginia, surround the rolling hills of Richmond, as well as the Roanoke and Shenandoah valleys. In fact, there are few spots in the state further than half an hour from a winery.

Handy road markers depicting a cluster of grapes inform drivers of the distance to the nearest winery. Visitors planning an overnight stay may want to consider Lansdowne Resort's Wine Country Tour Package, which includes accommodations and a chauffeur-driven wine country tour.

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wine
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BRIEFLY NOTED

Men of Tomorrow, by Gerard Jones (Basic; \$26). This history of the birth of superhero comics highlights three pivotal figures. The story begins early in the last century, on the Lower East Side, where Harry Donenfeld rises from the streets to become king of the "smooches"—soft-core magazines with titles like *French Humor* and *Hot Tales*. Later, two high-school friends in Cleveland, Joe Shuster and Jerry Siegel, become avid fans of "scientifiction," the new kind of literature promoted by their favorite pulp magazines. The disparate worlds of the wise guy and the geeks collide in 1938, and the result is *Action Comics #1*, the debut of Superman. For Donenfeld, the comics were a way to sidestep the censors. For Shuster and Siegel, they were both a calling and an eventual source of misery: the pair waged a lifelong campaign for credit and appropriate compensation.

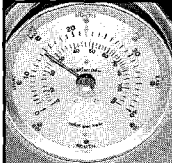
The Comics Before 1945, by Brian Walker (Abrams; \$50). Walker follows his previous book, "The Comics Since 1945," with this similarly encyclopedic and sumptuously produced volume. He asserts that comics did not, strictly speaking, start with the Yellow Kid (whose nightshirt was at first blue). Nonetheless, the spectacular success of Richard F. Outcault's grammatically inept street urchin essentially inaugurated American comic-strip culture. Walker revisits such popular titles as "Blondie," a high-living-flapper strip that subsequently became a tale about everyman Dagwood Bumstead; "Li'l Abner," said by John Steinbeck to contain some of the best writing in the world; "Secret Agent X-9," originally written by Dashiell Hammett; and the nearly forgotten "Wash Tubbs,"



which featured a valiant but flawed do-gooder named Captain Easy, the prototype for the modern superhero. Over the next half century, comics gradually split into the two main genres still recognizable today: improbable adventure stories and situational high jinks.

Necromancy by the Blue Bean Bush: Krazy and Ignatz, 1933-1934, by George Herriman; edited by Bill Blackbeard and Derya Ataker (Fantagraphics; \$14.95). "Krazy Kat," a strip about a cat who loves an unattainable mouse, ran in Hearst papers from 1913 to 1944, when Hearst, a longtime champion who saved the strip from cancellation on more than one occasion, paid it the rare compliment of letting it die with its creator. This fifth volume of a projected fifteen-volume traversal of the entire series takes us up to a mysterious gap in the mid-thirties, after which the previously black-and-white strip returned in color. In these final black-and-white examples, Herriman's panels convey an irrepressible sense of movement and incorporate distinctly surreal touches, such as the thronged mushrooms that "rise to feast in florid fungushood," blooming like umbrellas under a cheese-slice moon.

Animation Art, edited by Jerry Beck (HarperDesign; \$45). While mentioning such precursors as the nineteenth century's zoetrope and the lantern slides that afforded crude animated effects as early as the seventeenth century, Beck and his contributors concentrate on the history of film animation and provide a comprehensive overview. The pioneers here include Winsor McCay, Walt Disney, and a variety of European and Asian auteurs whose work tended to be less populist. This dichotomy between the medium's high-art potential and its commercial appeal has persisted into the present, with such innovators as Pixar, on the one hand, and Jan Svankmajer, on the other. The two strands met in the career of Oskar Fischinger, a German émigré to California, whose abstract animations elaborating his concept of "visual music" were influential but who lasted just nine months on Disney's "Fantasia."



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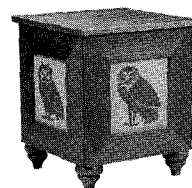
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WHY WORK?

A hundred years of "The Protestant Ethic."

BY ELIZABETH KOLBERT

In the fall of 1897, Max Weber suffered a nervous breakdown. He was thirty-three years old—still quite young, in the rigidly hierarchical world of German academia—and occupied a prestigious chair in political economics at the University of Heidelberg. Over the previous decade, routinely working until 1 A.M., he had assembled a list of publications that filled several pages and ranged from the agrarian history of Rome to the deficiencies of the German stock market. Following his breakdown, according to his wife, Marianne, who also happened to be his cousin, “everything was too much for him; he could not read, write, talk, walk or sleep without torment.” A slight improvement in his condition was followed by a relapse, another improvement, and then an even more serious breakdown. By October, 1903, he had given up teaching altogether; apparently, the idea of having to prepare lectures and deliver them at a predetermined time was more than he could bear. The following year, he recovered sufficiently to write what would become his most celebrated work and one of the founding texts of the emergent discipline of sociology, “The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.”

Originally published as a two-part essay in the scholarly journal *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, “The Protestant Ethic” is brief (at least by Weberian standards), dense, and completely idiosyncratic. Nominally, it is a work of cultural history; why, Weber asks, did the institutions of modern capitalism come into being in a particular region (northern

Europe) at a particular time (the seventeenth century) even though “the *auri sacra fames*,” as he puts it—the greed for gold—“is as old as the history of man?” Weber was not the first to pose this question; in German academic circles, it was the subject of running debate. Nor would he be the last. But the answer he came up with—in effect, that Donald Trump is



After a breakdown, Max Weber found his great subject: rationality.

the spiritual heir of Martin Luther—probably still ranks as the most perverse.

Almost immediately, “The Protestant Ethic” became a target of criticism, which Weber, alternately aggrieved and irascible, spent years trying to answer. (By the time he republished the work, shortly before his death, in 1920, the footnotes he had added had grown longer than the

original essay.) In the century since then, there is hardly a claim made in “The Protestant Ethic,” either about the history of religion or about the history of economics, that hasn’t been challenged; one Weber scholar recently dubbed the ongoing debate “the academic Hundred Years’ War.” The reason that Weber’s essay remains so compelling despite all the controversy is that it isn’t really a work about the past; it’s an allegory about the present.

Everyone who is part of the modern capitalist economy—whether he’s employed flipping burgers, writing code, or putting out a weekly magazine—has at one point or another considered that his efforts had an ascetic cast. We all accept the notion that our jobs ought to be more than just a way to sustain ourselves and acknowledge working to be our duty. But we don’t quite understand why this is the case. Post-nervous breakdown, Weber appears to have felt with peculiar intensity both the compulsion to labor and its fundamental motivelessness. And, if he didn’t actually come up with a resolution to the problem (either a good reason to work or a way to stop doing so), he did invent in “The Protestant Ethic” a myth to explain his, and our, befuddlement.

From early on, Weber’s drive was apparent. As an adolescent, he spent his Christmas holidays writing essays on subjects like “the course of German history with particular reference to the position of Kaiser and Pope,” and entered into a lengthy correspondence with an older cousin on Homer, Virgil, Herodotus, and Cicero. By the time he graduated from the *Gymnasium*, he is supposed to have made his way through all forty volumes of Goethe’s collected works. (His teachers thought he had an attitude problem.)

Weber was trained not as a sociologist—there was no such field until he helped to invent it—but as a lawyer, and he began his academic career lecturing

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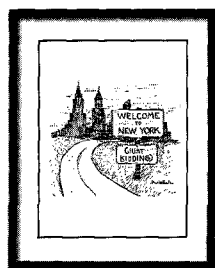


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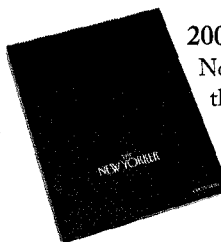


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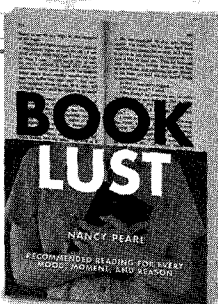
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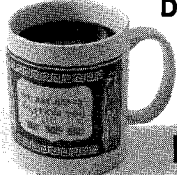
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on legal history. Virtually nothing that he wrote before his breakdown is still read today. (Typical of his early works is a nine-hundred-page report on the condition of agricultural workers in the German regions east of the Elbe.) In time for the centenary of "The Protestant Ethic," Fritz Ringer, professor emeritus at the University of Pittsburgh, has published "Max Weber: An Intellectual Biography" (Chicago; \$19). The book opens with Weber as he is emerging from his convalescence and never looks back.

With "The Protestant Ethic," Weber seems to have discovered his calling: the study of rationality. This is, for him, a capacious term. One Weber scholar counts sixteen different senses of "rational" in "The Protestant Ethic" alone, among them "systematic," "impersonal," "sober," "scrupulous," and "efficacious." In Weber's view, modern Western society is the product of increasingly rational forms of organization. Its institutions are governed by "systematic" rules and "impersonal" procedures, rather than by custom or religious obligation, and this sets it apart from virtually all other world cultures. Weber intended his assessment to be value-neutral; indeed, he spent much of his career arguing that aesthetic and moral evaluations had no role to play in the study of the social sciences. True to his word, he deems the highly rationalized order of modern society to be, as far as those who inhabit it are concerned, deeply irrational. What he sees as the fundamental mystery about the origins of modern capitalism is not why it took so long to be established but, rather, how, given actual human needs and desires, it ever came into being at all.

Near the start of "The Protestant Ethic," Weber illustrates this puzzle with a nineteenth-century version of a business-school case study. In agriculture, he notes, nothing is more important than the gathering of the harvest, and, owing to the uncertainties of the weather, the speed with which this is accomplished can spell the difference between profit and disaster. In an effort to encourage greater efficiency, some farmers have tried paying their workers more at harvest time. This tactic, however, has "with surprising frequency"

yielded a result precisely opposite that which had been hoped for:

Raising the piece-rates has often had the result that not more but less has been accomplished in the same time, because the worker reacted to the increase not by increasing but by decreasing the amount of his work. A man, for instance, who at the rate of 1 mark per acre mowed 2 1/2 acres per day and earned 2 1/2 marks, when the rate was raised to 1.25 marks per acre mowed, not 3 acres, as he might easily have done, thus earning 3.75 marks, but only 2 acres, so that he could still earn the 2 1/2 marks to which he was accustomed. . . . A man does not "by nature" wish to earn more and more money, but simply to live as he is accustomed to live and to earn as much as is necessary for that purpose.

In order for capitalism to succeed, everyone had to believe that earning more money, even if he had no particular need for it, was a good thing. But why would anyone believe that?

This is where Martin Luther and, perhaps even more pertinently, John Calvin come in. Weber's argument has several steps—or, if you prefer, leaps—and in a highly summarized form his reading of Reformation history runs as follows. Thanks to the doctrine of predestination, early Puritans believed that there was no way to affect—or even to know—one's eternal fate. At the same time, they believed that the faithful were obligated to live as if they knew themselves to be among the elect. Constant, uncomplaining labor came to be seen as the way to banish doubt. In this way, work acquired an ethical dimension.

Deeply opposed to sensual pleasure, the Puritans and members of other ascetic Protestant sects toiled away but didn't spend. Instead, they acquired capital, which, prudently invested, produced still more capital. Nothing, of course, was further from their minds than refashioning the world to suit Mammon, but, as is so often the case, their zeal had unintended consequences. "What the great religious epoch of the seventeenth century bequeathed to its utilitarian successor was . . . an amazingly good, we may even say a pharisaically good conscience in the acquisition of money," Weber writes. Subsequent generations lacked their forebears' spiritual commitment to labor, on the one hand, and to self-denial, on the other, but by this point it didn't really matter. Once the system

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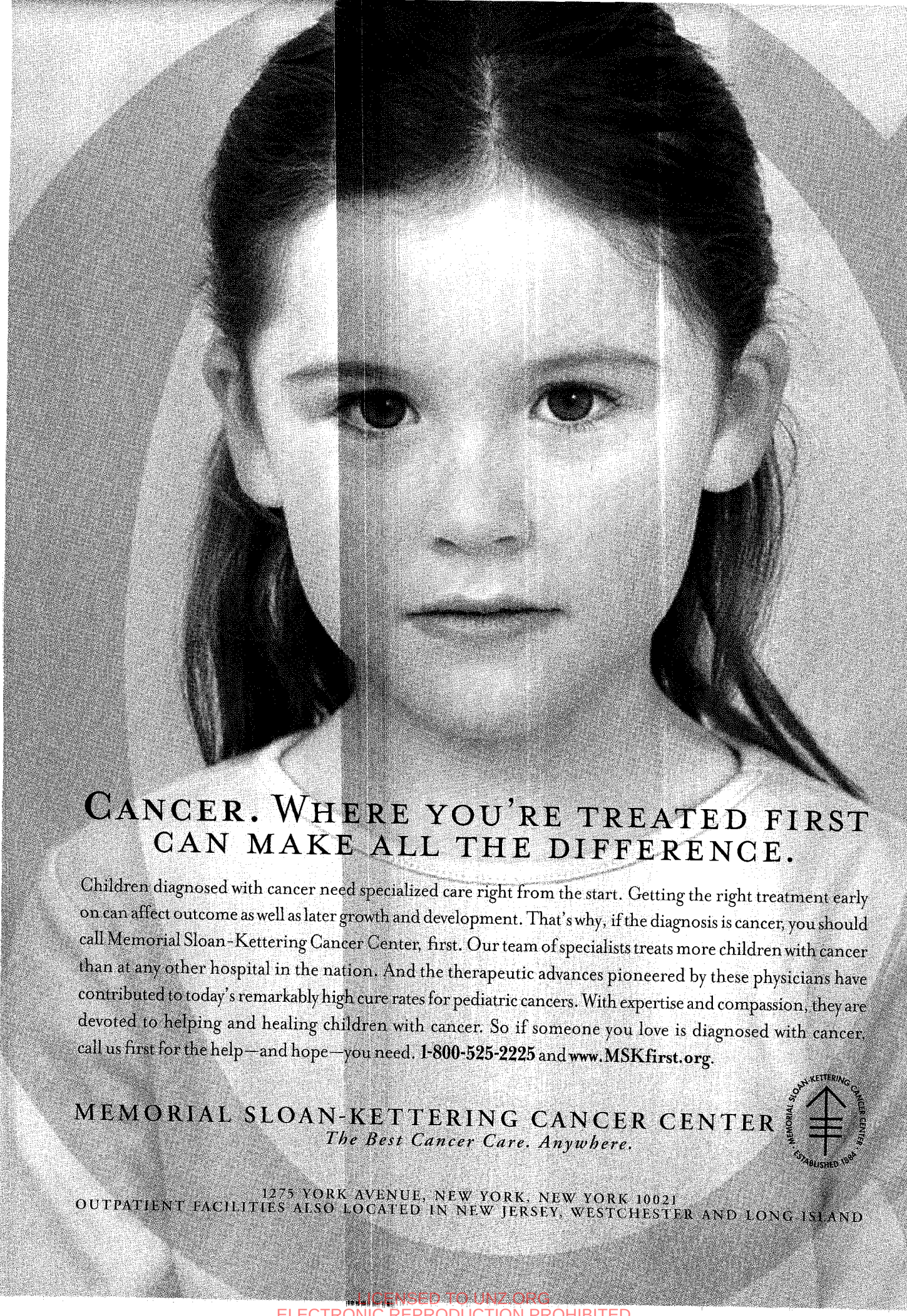


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was put in place, it carried all before it. "The Puritan wanted to work in a calling; we are forced to do so."

Weber's wife, Marianne, was his first biographer. Her "Max Weber: A Biography," published in 1926, runs to more than seven hundred pages in the English translation, and is a deeply odd book. Marianne consistently refers to herself in the third person, as in "When Marianne read this letter, she was profoundly shaken by a sense of the ineffable and eternal." In a chapter entitled "Break-down," she relates that she was secretly gratified by her husband's psychological problems: "If Weber's sovereign self-sufficiency had occasionally made her wonder whether he needed her, she now did not doubt it." Marianne suggests that her husband's illness was prompted by his father's death; the two men had had a falling out a couple of months earlier, and had not reconciled when Weber senior died. Others have suggested that Marianne herself was to blame. The Webers' marriage lasted for nearly thirty years but was never consummated; eventually, the long-suffering Weber had an affair with a friend of his wife's. As one Weber scholar has dryly observed, the couple's asexual relationship "certainly did not contribute to Weber's mental stability." Weber wrote a detailed chronicle of his illness, which must have offered some insight into the source of his suffering, but Marianne destroyed it in the final months of the Second World War, supposedly out of fear that the Nazis would use it to discredit him.

A social theorist in her own right, Marianne was an early leader of the German feminist movement. After organizing a march in the fall of 1910—a "beautiful and encouraging" march, in her words—she was mocked, or at least so she believed, by a young docent at the University of Heidelberg, with which Weber was still affiliated. In a newspaper article, the docent declared that all feminists were either widowed, unmarried, Jewish, or sterile. Weber's response—fairly typical of his dealings with the world—was "systematic," "scrupulous," "efficacious," and, at the same time, completely nuts. He offered to fight a duel with his wife's antagonist, demanded a retraction of a newspaper account of the contretemps, and, eventually, after a series

of increasingly baroque charges and countercharges, was sued for libel by the paper's editors. The dispute resulted in the filing of three lawsuits in two cities and ended only when Weber, having ruined the career of a colleague in the university's history department, discovered that he felt sorry for all the casualties he had produced. (After the last of the trials, Marianne wrote to Weber's mother, "It is gruesome when things take their own course, detached from the initial impulse of the person who set them in motion.") But no sooner had Weber declared his remorse—"Never again!" he wrote to the dean of the faculty—than he plunged into another protracted and highly public battle, this time over a new edition of a handbook of political economy that he had written. In the course of this to-do, he challenged his opponent to a duel with sabres "under the most stringent conditions permitted in academic practice." (The duel never came off, because of Christmas vacation.)

Even as all this wrangling was taking place, Weber continued to write dense, voluminous meditations on rationality. (His magnum opus, "Economy and Society," spans well over a thousand pages, although it was never finished.) Weber's investigation of Protestantism led him to undertake studies on the "economic ethics" of other world religions, including Hinduism, Islam, and Buddhism, and his interest in the origins of the modern Western society produced works on, among many other topics, the evolution of cities, the sociology of law, the decline of feudalism, and the rise of bureaucracy. This last development was, for Weber, particularly significant; he saw bureaucratic institutions as technically more effective than other forms of administration, just as he saw mechanical means of production as more efficient than non-mechanical means and capitalist economies as destined to outcompete traditional ones. Weber's vision of bureaucracy is different from the one you might get by standing in line at, say, the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles. In his view, only a well-ordered bureaucracy is capable of supporting a modern technological society, and this fact is problematic precisely insofar as those running the machinery are actually competent. The Germans, of course, have always had a peculiar talent for *Ordnung*—the pas-

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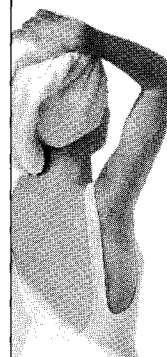
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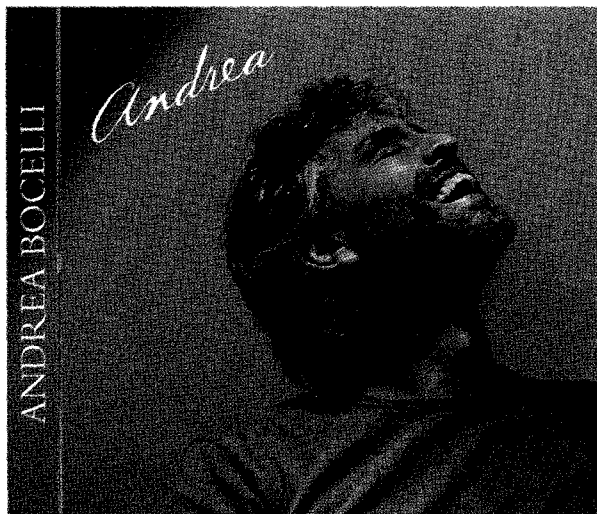
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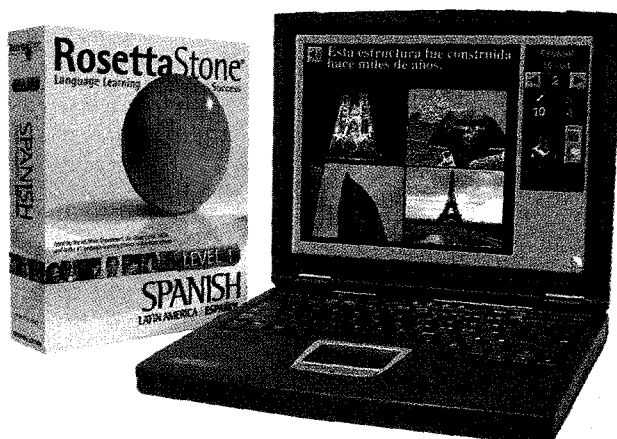
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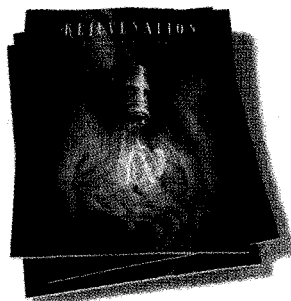
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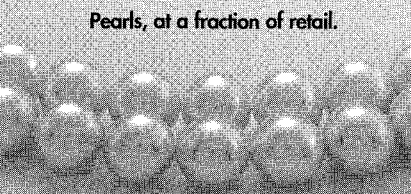
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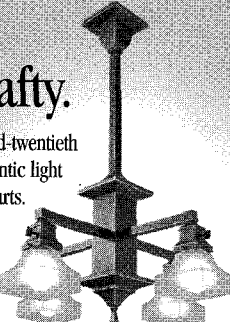
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sion for bureaucracy among German students "is enough to drive one to despair," Weber once declared. Still, the conflict between organizational efficiency and individual needs has universal implications. Bureaucracy is central to the rise of capitalism because bureaucracies, at least according to Weber, make decisions that are predictable and, hence, amenable to calculation. Indeed, he writes, bureaucracy becomes more useful to capitalism the more it "depersonalizes" itself; "i.e., the more completely it succeeds in achieving the exclusion of love, hatred, and every purely personal . . . feeling from the execution of official tasks."

The contrast between Weber's scholarly pursuits and his personal behavior struck many of his contemporaries as bizarre, even comical. But the incoherence of modern life could be said to have been Weber's great subject. Weber used the term *Entzauberung*—"dis-enchantment"—to describe the way in which science and technology had inevitably displaced magical thinking. The new rationalism had the instrumental advantage of allowing the world to be mastered. But what the new thinking couldn't provide was, in terms of lived experience, hardly less important. Rationality could do everything but make sense of itself.

The most famous passage of "The Protestant Ethic" comes at the end, when Weber, who has struggled—not always successfully—to maintain a dispassionate stance toward his subject, finally gives up the effort:

For when asceticism was carried out of monastic cells into everyday life, and began to dominate worldly morality, it did its part in building the tremendous cosmos of the modern economic order. This order is now bound to the technical and economic conditions of machine production which today determine the lives of all the individuals who are born into this mechanism, not only those directly concerned with economic acquisition, with irresistible force. Perhaps it will so determine them until the last ton of fossilized coal is burnt.

This analysis, with its grim determinism, is reminiscent of many of Marx's most sweeping pronouncements. (Weber has been called, not particularly kindly, but also perhaps not inaccurately, "a bourgeois Marx.") For all of his insistence on the importance of abstract ideas in the inception of capitalism, Weber follows Marx in viewing alienation as

the essential experience of the modern economic order. In certain respects, Weber's critique is the more thoroughgoing. By his account, *all* of us—the wealthy and the poor, owners and workers—lead economic lives of quiet desperation. And while Marx imagines a liberating crisis at the end of history, Weber pictures a future that is apt to be as unsatisfactory as the present. Materialism has become, in his words, "an iron cage":

No one knows who will live in this cage in the future, or whether at the end of this tremendous development entirely new prophets will arise, or there will be a great rebirth of old ideas and ideals, or, if neither, mechanized petrification, embellished with a sort of convulsive self-importance.

These days, to go by self-description, there are still many more Marxists rattling around than there are Weberians—the French philosopher Raymond Aron once wrote, "Weberism does not lend itself to the elaboration of an orthodoxy, unless one gives that name to the rejection of all orthodoxies"—even though, it could be argued, it is Weber's brand of fatalism, rather than Marx's, that has been vindicated. His writings anticipate both the rise and fall of the Soviet Union—Weber saw planned economies as leading, more or less inevitably, to tyranny—and also the steady, soulless spread of global capitalism. Since 1904, working conditions, at least in the West, have markedly improved, while market efficiencies have produced wealth and comfort on an unprecedented scale. At the same time, every year brings more evidence that the system obeys its own logic, regardless of what anyone, or for that matter everyone, might wish. The triumph of Wal-Mart, the death of the family farm, the flow of blue-collar jobs to Juárez and white-collar jobs to Bangalore: all are developments that in their equivocal character—from one perspective supremely rational and from another self-defeating—are consistent with Weber's notions of progress and the futility of trying (or even wanting to try) to resist it.

"It is true that the path of human destiny cannot but appall him who surveys a section of it," Weber writes in the introduction to "The Protestant Ethic." "But he will do well to keep his small personal commentaries to himself, as one does at the sight of the sea or of majestic mountains." ♦

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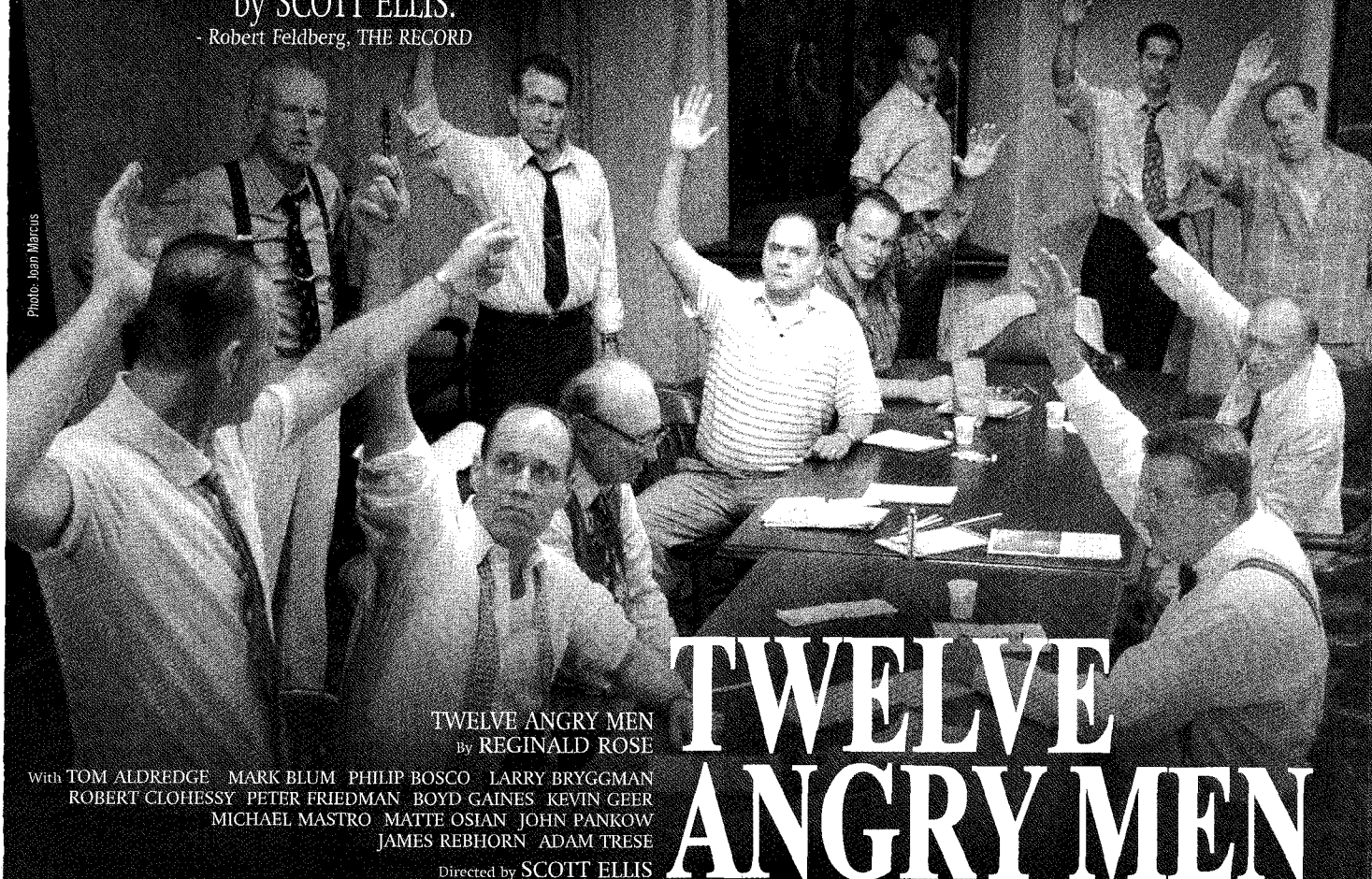


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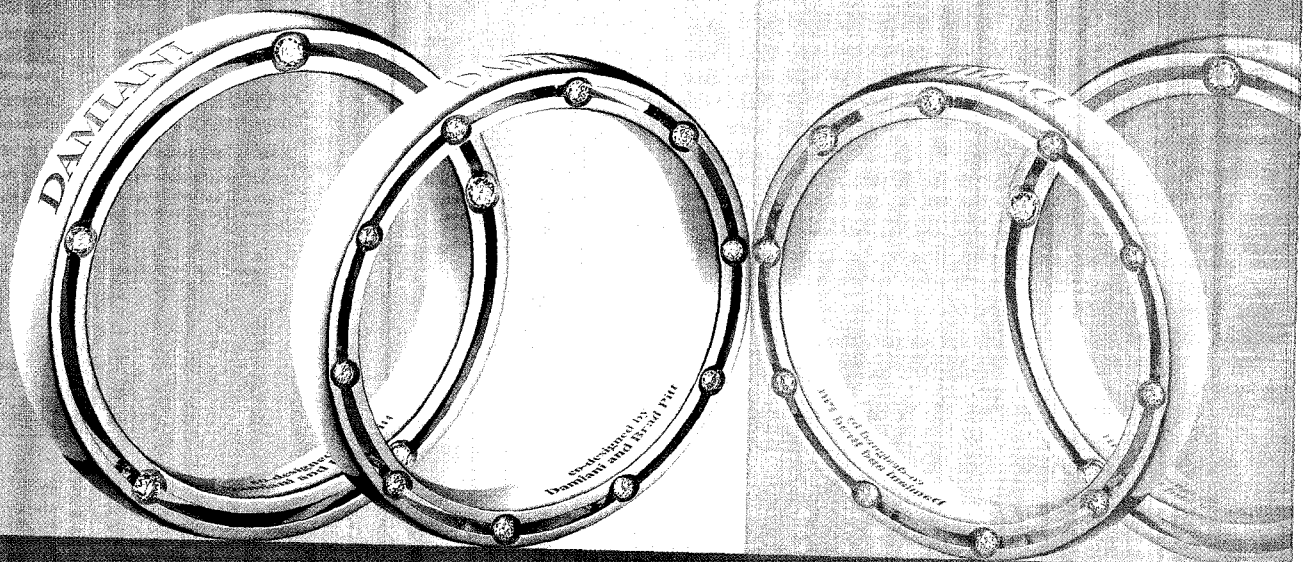
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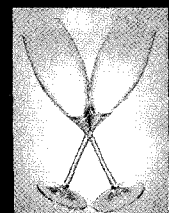
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Dr. Buzz Aldrin's favorite ties are hand-painted in various colors and feature the moon and stars. He wears them often, he says, "as an indication of my past, the future other people look forward to, and because I think the stars inspire us all."

Coming this fall, he – as well as his admirers – will have another accessory that celebrates his luminous accomplishments: The Eagle Pilot's Watch by Accutron, which will feature the famous astronaut's signature on the caseback.

Bulova Corporation created the watch to commemorate both the hundredth anniversary of aviation and the thirty-fifth anniversary of Apollo 11's moon landing, when Aldrin became one of the first two men to walk atop the dust of the lunar surface.

Aldrin used Bulova's Accutron technology through much of his career in space – placing an Accutron timer for crucial data transmissions in the Sea of Tranquility during his moonwalk. Four years ago he became a spokesperson for the Accutron line.

The watch is an embodiment of style and adventure, much like the man it honors. Aldrin has had an intrepid spirit for as far back as he can remember, and it led him to West Point, where he graduated with honors, going on to become a U.S. Air Force fighter pilot. Next came combat in Korea, where he flew Sabre Jets in 66 combat missions. After returning to the States, he headed to M.I.T., where he received a doctorate in astronautics. His career with NASA began in 1963, and three years later, as a crew member of the Gemini 12 mission, he took his first space walk. He floated outside the craft for about five hours, thus taking nearly two trips around the world.

Thirty-five years after his moonwalk, Aldrin hasn't stopped seeking the rush of an exciting quest. The writer, businessman, and recipient of the



Dr. Buzz Aldrin
Apollo Astronaut



*"I'm quite
aware I was given
great opportunities
throughout my life to
serve my country"*

Presidential Medal of Freedom still enjoys physically demanding sports like scuba diving and snow skiing. And, in September he became one of the first to fly aboard a commercial plane that darts up and down like a roller coaster to create zero gravity, allowing its handful of participants to experience weightlessness. "It's a real eye-opening and exhilarating experience," he says. As a vocal proponent of space tourism, he hopes others can experience even greater adventures in the future.

With such a zest for life, is it any wonder Aldrin prefers to wear colors? (One exception: spacesuits, which are white to reflect sunlight.) The national hero is particularly fond of blue. "It signifies the skies and outward reaching of humanity," he says, adding, "and it also matches my eyes."

The astronaut himself has extended his talents in fascinating and selfless ways, and Accutron celebrates his achievements with its Eagle Pilot's Watch this fall. Aldrin likes the timepiece because it is stylishly sophisticated yet ideal for the active outdoor adventurer. With great modesty he expresses gratitude for an enviable career. "I'm quite aware I was given great opportunities throughout my life to serve my country," he says.

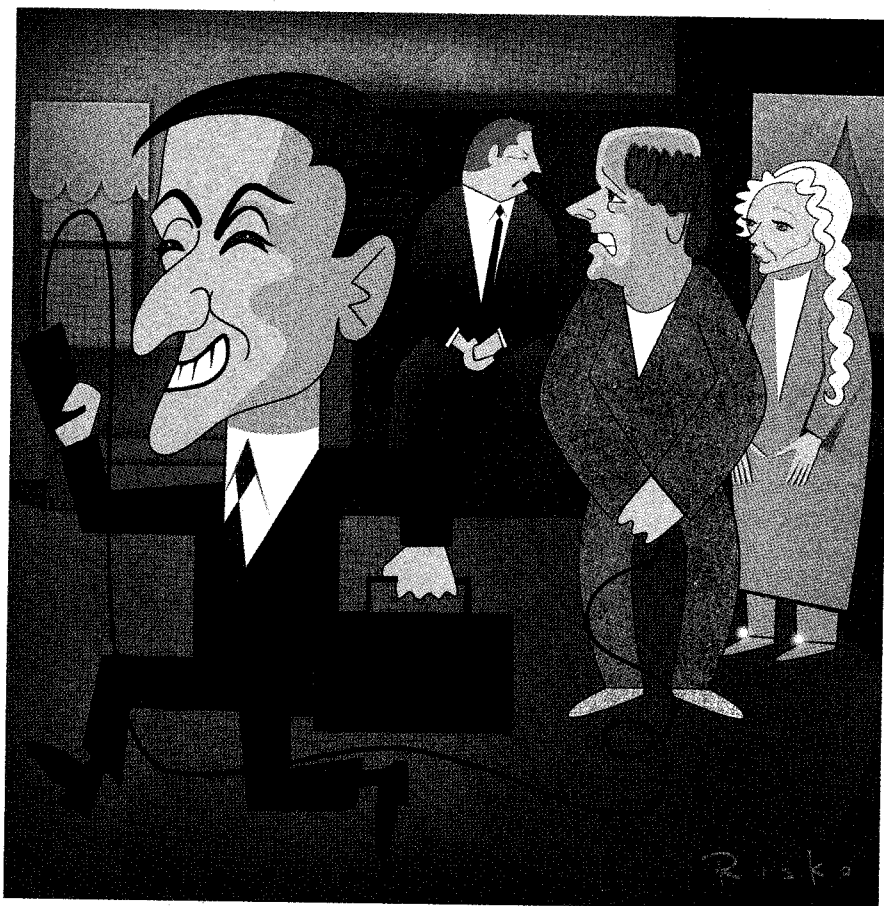
ACCUTRON

THE THEATRE

SHADOWBOXING

Rage takes the stage.

BY JOHN LAHR



Sam Shepard's *"The God of Hell"* is a vision of spiritual contamination.

ROBERT RISKO
 "Straight male seeks Bush supporter for fair, physical fight," someone wrote in a widely distributed Web-site posting last week. But onstage the fight for an alternative vision of America is beginning not with a show of force but with a show of imagination. For instance, Whoopi Goldberg, playing a self-confessed male "dope fiend" named Fontaine—one of five characters she channels in her one-woman show (at the Lyceum)—spends about twenty minutes meditating on the state of the nation. "I'm not fuckin' wit' ya. I'm just prep-pin' you for the future," Fontaine says of "morality issues." He asks, "Are you now or have you ever been a homosexual?" adding, "If you don't want gay people to get married, don't marry one." Goldberg,

like many comedians, has faith in her comic witness and its power to create a seismic disturbance. "I devised a way to keep it light, so I can keep my eyes open," Goldberg says, through Fontaine, launching into the Police's "Every Breath You Take." "Every move you make, every claim you stake, I'll be watching *you*—George!" she says, and exits.

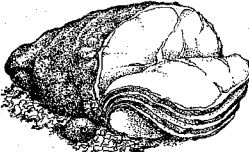
By contrast, Sam Shepard, in his apocalyptic cartoon "The God of Hell" (well directed by Lou Jacob, at the Actors Studio Drama School Theatre), goes beyond the headlines in order to transform his rage at the nation's fear-induced turn to the right into a vision of spiritual contamination. Here, a school bell that a Wisconsin farmer's wife uses to call her taciturn husband in from his

herd of dairy cows becomes, in the course of the play, an alarm bell that rings not just for him but for us.

Of all the contemporary American playwrights, Shepard has the deepest connection to the romance of the land, and a sense of the sin that comes with it. Although "The God of Hell" begins ordinarily, with the faux naturalism of a wood-beamed house in which a farmer, Frank (Randy Quaid), is oiling his boots, and his wife, Emma (J. Smith-Cameron), is watering her plants, the style and content of the story turn by degrees into the grotesque—a fierce distortion that is a measure of the author's fear and loathing. "To the hard of hearing you shout, and for the almost-blind you draw large and startling figures," Flannery O'Connor said of the grotesque. Shepard's startling theatrical figure is Welch (Tim Roth), a perky, well-dressed agent of officialdom who arrives to interrupt the banality of rural daily life. Welch, whose name carries overtones of default and evasion, is anarchy in the guise of the acceptable: he wears a suit and an American-flag lapel pin and seems to owe his historical origins to John Ashcroft and his literary paternity to Joe Orton's demented Detective Truscott, in "Loot." ("You're at liberty to answer your own doorbell, Miss. That is how we tell whether or not we live in a free society," he says.) Welch's calling card—waved through the door before he enters—is a cookie in the shape of an American flag. As he questions Emma about the house and who is staying there, Roth, full of thrusting movement and flashing a smile of big, bright, predatory teeth, makes a terrifying show of chauvinistic bonhomie. He notices, for instance, a flagpole without a flag. "I'm not in Bulgaria or Turkistan or somewhere lost in the Balkans," he says. "You'd think there would be a flag up or something to that effect. Some sign. Some indication of loyalty and pride." He adds, "We could be anywhere." He offers to sell Emma all manner of patriotic bric-a-brac from his briefcase, including a red-white-and-blue bullhorn and a recording of Pat Boone singing "Battle Hymn of the Republic."

Emma, who is given to exclamations like "jimony" and "criminy," is the voice of homespun American good sense. Welch won't take no for an answer to the ques-

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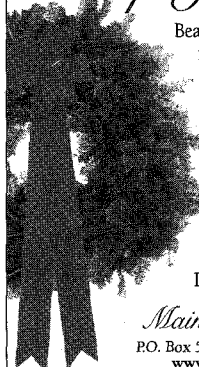
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tion of whether anyone is staying in her basement. "Swear on a stack of Bibles?" he asks. Emma says, matter-of-factly, "I don't have to," and her reply sends him packing.

But, of course, there is someone in the basement, whom Emma is waiting to meet, and for whom she is fixing breakfast. Haynes (Frank Wood), a mysterious school friend of her husband's, who may or may not be a researcher for some government agency, arrived late the previous night. When Haynes finally appears, in his pajamas, he is a jittery, timid man with a bald pate. Emma reaches out to shake his hand; a jolt of blue light, which he calls "static shock," buzzes through his fingers and sends them both careering backward. In Shepard's symbolic frame of mind, static shock is also the shock of stasis; in the sizzle and flash of electricity, Shepard gives the toxic, paralyzing quality of fear a marvellous image. Haynes's job and his story are unclear; his fear is palpable. "Do you know what plutonium is named after, Frank?" he asks. "Pluto—the god of Hell." "Do you know how long it remains radioactive? . . . Five hundred thousand years. . . . The most carcinogenic substance known to man." When Frank happens to mention Haynes's place of work—Rocky Buttes—Haynes sends him sprawling across the kitchen table as he muffles the words. Blue light pops and hisses at his touch.

Haynes turns out to be an enemy whom the government has made. He's a "left-leaning" employee who rebelled against his paymasters, and has gone AWOL from an impending nuclear disaster at Rocky Buttes, which the relentlessly positive Welch, when he reappears the next day, spins as "a minor leakage" and a "provoking re-birth." Welch, who has been hard at work stapling American flags up in the house and turning it into "our Think Tank," calls Haynes out of hiding. Haynes looks around and says, "You can't just co-opt their house." Welch brays, "We're in the driver's seat. Haven't you noticed? There's no more of that nonsense of checks and balances. All that red tape . . . We don't have to answer to a soul—least of all a couple of Wisconsin dairy farmers."

"Frank, the whole world can't just suddenly get turned inside out like this overnight," Emma says, as fear steam-

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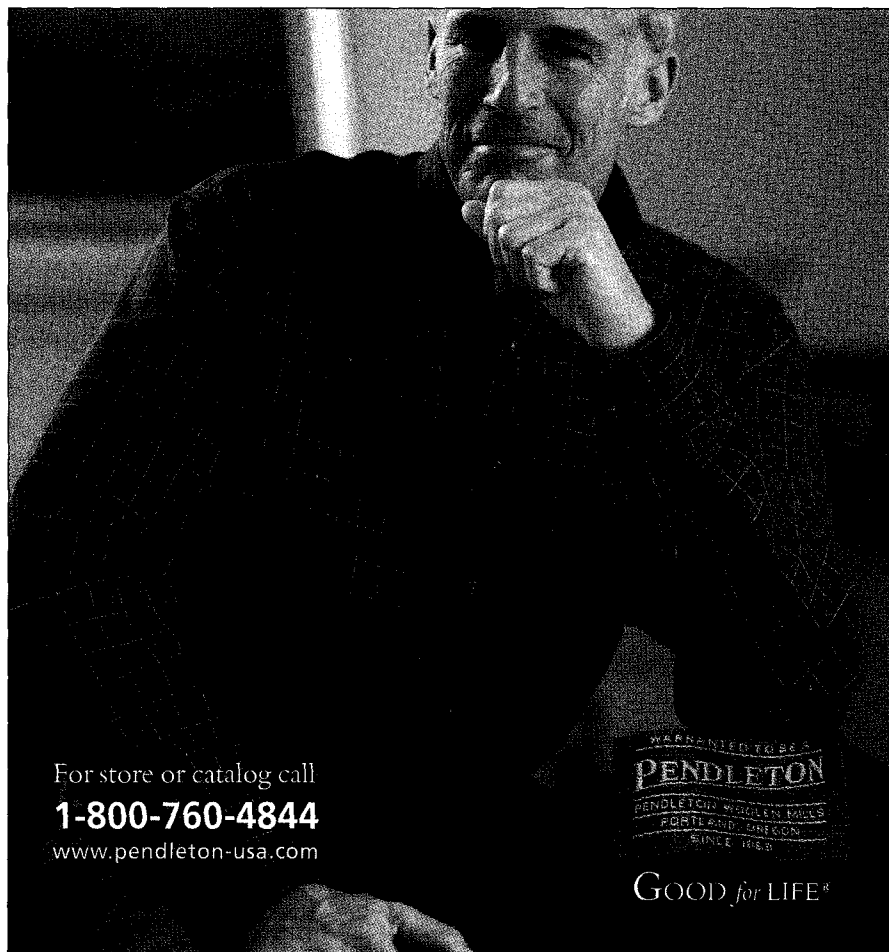
A decade of New Yorker Film Notes.

A calendar of New Yorker events across the country.

rolls him to act against his best interests. Frank sells his herd, forgets his farming heritage, and dresses like a clone of Welch. "He knows the Big Picture, Emma," Frank says. "He's got a plan." As Quaid expertly plays him, Frank is a goofy, bewildered hulk who hobbles forward clutching his crotch; he embodies the axiom that stress makes you stupid, and, in this case, fear has him literally by the short and curlies. Pain, Shepard suggests, makes you forget the past and focus all your energy on the alleviation of anxiety. "There's no memory anymore," Welch says, and his unspoken threat of reprisal makes Haynes give up his rebellion and drives him back underground, to the basement.

In this panicky, topsy-turvy world, language becomes a signifier of delirium, not of reality. When Emma asks Welch not to call her by her first name, he says, "Stop acting like some whacked-out subversive." When Welch, in an echo of Pozzo and Lucky, the blind master and his slave in "Waiting for Godot," ascends from the basement hauling Haynes at the end of a long electric cord attached to his penis and with a black sack over his head—"This is absolute torture! I don't care what country we're in," Emma says—he tells her that he's just "reprogramming." In Shepard's plays, there is usually an elegiac moment, about ten minutes from the end, in which the American landscape is evoked; "The God of Hell" has such a moment but transforms the lyricism into outraged nostalgia. Frank speaks of powder-blue American skies, wheeling hawks, the smell of alfalfa, the sound of calves, and then concludes, "I miss the Cold War so much."

Shepard doesn't have the structural prowess to turn his situation into genuine farce, but he manages a confident and unsettling scenario of surreal doom. Welch whips up a momentum that catches all the characters in its slipstream. "There's no more thinking to do. It's time for action," Welch says. "We are going to deliver you to your Manifest Destiny." Frank and Haynes get in step; holding their crotches, they hobble toward their unknown future. As the scene fades to black, static shocks—those signs of contamination—explode around the stage; everything, it appears, has been infected. ♦



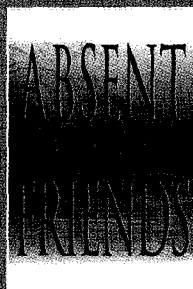
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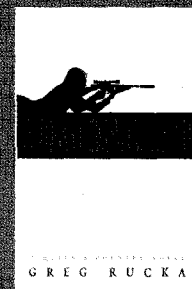
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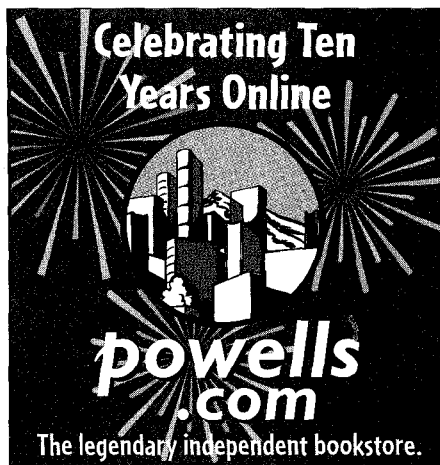
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MUSICAL EVENTS

MAESTRO NORTH

A new era at the Boston Symphony.

BY ALEX ROSS

James Levine is a happy man. Or so it seemed when I talked to him earlier this month, in his office at Symphony Hall in Boston. The man who leads the two most venerable institutions in American music—the Metropolitan Opera and the Boston Symphony—looked to be in good health. He spoke in rapid, enthusiastic, circuitous paragraphs, his eyes lighting up whenever he touched on a favorite score. Having just finished rehearsals for Beethoven's "Eroica" Symphony and Elliott Carter's "Symphonia," he was full of thoughts about how Beethoven was really the first contemporary composer and how Carter is really an old master. He was fine-tuning programs for the following season, lavishing special attention on a series pairing Beethoven and Schoenberg. He had figured out how to present Beethoven's thorny "Grosse Fuge," which rivals anything by Schoenberg in its capacity to make audiences fidget. With a grin, he said that he would play the "Grosse Fuge" twice in the same program, with the violin concertos of Beethoven and Schoenberg in between. He was hoping to create a time-warp effect in which Beethoven would be heard as both past and present. "We can't make this into a piece from 'back then,'" he said. "It's a piece from right here and now." Resting on his piano was the freshly printed score of Milton Babbitt's "Concerti for Orchestra," which he will conduct in January. "Come look at this," he said, patting the music as if it were a healthy baby.

Levine is preëminent among American conductors, yet he remains a curiously contested figure. Some intelligent listeners of my acquaintance are perpetually dissatisfied with him, although they seldom agree whether his performances are too predictable or too idiosyncratic, too polished or too ragged. Fifth-hand rumors of the urban-legend variety swirl around him. Last spring, the *Times* quoted anonymous players who questioned Levine's ability to give a clear beat on account of a

tremor in his left arm. This kind of chatter inevitably catches up to any conductor who stays in one place for a long time. Although I've never been among the carpers, I've sensed that some of the zing has gone out of the thirty-three-year-old relationship between Levine and the Met orchestra. Uncertainty hangs over the entire house. The Met recently unsettled the music world by announcing that Peter Gelb, a record-company executive best known for crossover projects, would be its next general manager.

Small wonder, then, that Levine is happy to be in Boston. I attended his gala début, a thunderous account of Mahler's Eighth Symphony, and returned for two other programs. It's hard for an out-of-towner to generalize from three concerts, but Levine already seems to have added lustre to the scene. The orchestra is playing with a tonal beauty and rhythmic bounce that it long lacked under Seiji Ozawa. A performance of Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring," in particular, had the same visceral precision that marks the conductor's best nights at the Met. Levine's empire of the just-so is moving north.

Can an institution be both élitist and populist? If any orchestra can pull it off, it's the Boston Symphony, which, since its inception, in 1881, has carried itself like a grande dame of Back Bay who invites both fancy and scruffy people to her parties. The Boston audience is simply different from any other orchestra public in America. In one corner, Harvard musicologists cite Adorno; in another, sweatshirt-clad Longy School of Music students complain of insufficient legato; meanwhile, the sages of Brookline fondly recall Koussevitzky. Joseph Horowitz, in his forthcoming history of American classical music, notes that Isabella Stewart Gardner used to wear a Red Sox hatband to Boston Symphony concerts. Indeed, I saw more than a few Red Sox



Levine's fall program is risky—almost a third of the works are from the past fifty years. Photograph by Gilles Peress.

insignia at Symphony Hall the night after the World Series ended. As Goethe predicted in the text of the Mahler Eighth, "The unattainable here becomes fact."

Levine thinks that the Boston audience is primed for something other than the usual cautious programming. "With Harvard here, with the New England Conservatory, with all the other schools, the number of people you meet who are warm and passionate and smart about the subject"—meaning music—"is maybe higher than anywhere else in the country. It's not that New York doesn't have it, but the community there is larger, more

spread out. Boston is somehow just perfect for me."

The city has been rewarded with some gorgeous performances. Schoenberg's "Five Pieces for Orchestra" sounded almost unlawfully voluptuous, as Levine emphasized certain D-minor-like sonorities in the second movement that threaten to stop the Atonal Express before it leaves the station. Ligeti's "Lontano," too, was more serene and seductive than the composer's avant-garde reputation might suggest: again, the conductor pointed up the half-familiar chords that are strewn about the score—some near-

G-minor there, some maybe-D-major here. In the "Rite," Stravinsky's convulsive gestures hung in the air like violent paintings on a white wall, their energy at once intensified and organized. The atmosphere was electric throughout: Levine seemed to be choosing tempos a split second faster than what the orchestra had been given in rehearsal, so that the music had an unchecked, hurtling motion.

Because the late-Romantic and early-twentieth-century repertory was always Ozawa's specialty, the orchestra's strength in that area came as no surprise. Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert, by comparison,

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sounded less stylistically secure, though still super-refined in the old Boston style. Levine told me that in the Classical and early-Romantic scores he wanted to work on clarity of articulation, which can be difficult to obtain with Symphony Hall's resonant acoustics. "I really don't like the 'coerced blend,'" he said, referring to the sort of artificially smoothed-over textures that some conductors favor in Mozart. The "Prague" Symphony, admittedly, never quite roused itself from a slumber of sweet strings; the winds were too much at a distance. (Last month, I heard a more sharply characterized "Prague" from the American Classical Orchestra, at the Church of St. Vincent Ferrer, in New York.) The "Eroica," by contrast, had real urgency, a disciplined roughness. These days, Levine is willing to sacrifice ultimate beauty in pursuit of a dramatic interplay of voices.

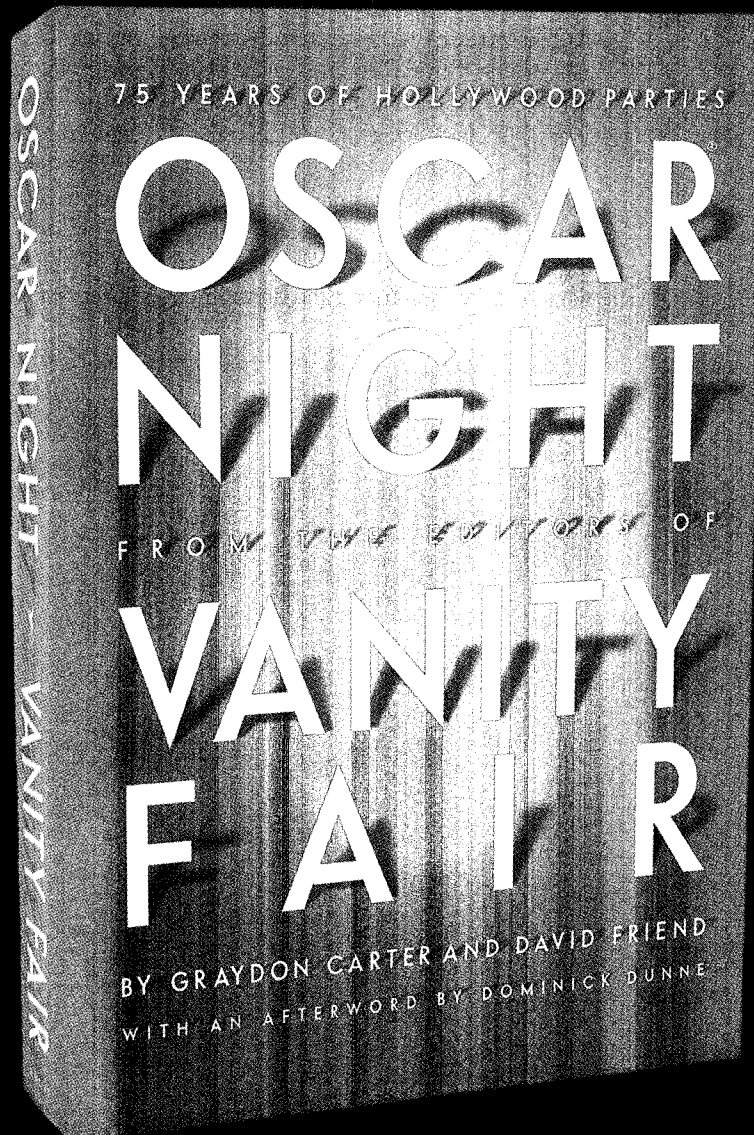
Perhaps the fact that the orchestra essayed Elliott Carter before intermission added to the punch of its Beethoven. This is one reason that Levine is stressing new music in Boston: he thinks it will have an invigorating effect on how the orchestra plays and on how the audience listens. His programming this fall is riskily biased toward the present. Two-thirds of the works are from the twentieth century, almost one-third from the past fifty years. What is more, Levine is avoiding the sort of neo-tonal music that audiences generally embrace; instead, he is in lockstep with the Old Guard of American modernism, the likes of Carter, Babbitt, and Charles Wuorinen, together with postwar European masters like Ligeti and Lutoslawski. It remains to be seen how the average listener will take this strict modern diet. I myself wish that Levine would lend an ear to John Adams and other less curmudgeonly characters, but there is no point in asking a conductor to advocate music he doesn't believe in. Anecdotal evidence suggests that Bostonians will be willing to put up with a fair amount of atonal hurly-burly if it keeps their new star happy.

To pair Carter's "Symphonia" with Beethoven's "Eroica" was a delightfully brazen gesture. It was also an honorable acknowledgment of the almost ninety-six-year-old composer, who had yet to hear his biggest and probably best piece performed by a major American orchestra. Carter's vast abstract canvas left me

feeling ambivalent, as his work often does. The outer movements suffer from a lack of thematic variety; the endless scurrying motion of the writing leads to premature fatigue. Yet the middle movement, "Adagio tenebroso," is deep, dark, powerfully affecting music. For once, Carter suspends his urge to juggle rhythms and writes spacious, stately paragraphs. Open fifths abound; ghosts of tonality glide about. (Yep, that's an F-minor triad in bar 171.) Like the second movement of the Beethoven, this is clearly a funeral cortège, though who or what is being buried is anyone's guess. The resemblance of the opening muted trumpet line to Ives's "Unanswered Question" gave me the idea that Ives himself, or some other great, old, eccentric, free-thinking American, was being carried to his grave.

As if in league with Levine's campaign for endangered American modernists, New York City Opera recently gave the world premiere of Wuorinen's "Haroun and the Sea of Stories." It is based on Salman Rushdie's fable of imagination and repression in an India-like land; the terse, funny libretto is by James Fenton. Although Wuorinen has not renounced the twelve-tone writing with which he made his name, he, too, now deposits triads in his scores as if they were pillow mints, and even indulges in pastiches of jazz and blues. Schoenberg once believed that atonal music could have the same emotional range as tonal music; Wuorinen, surrendering to psychoacoustic reality, uses dissonant complexity to express the terror of war and quasi-tonal passages to express love and reconciliation. Passages of the latter type are, admittedly, tentative and fleeting. This comedy growls and thrashes more than it sings and dances. Still, it's a robust, extroverted work, and City Opera, which started its season with a ghastly production of Strauss's "Daphne," served it well. Mark Lamos's Julie Taymor-ish staging was visually poetic; Heather Buck, Peter Strummer, Ethan Herschenfeld, and Joel Sorensen all gave satisfying performances, although they sometimes struggled to stay aboard the merry-go-round of Wuorinen's pitch rotations. To adapt Oscar Levant's remark about Gershwin, an evening with Charles Wuorinen is a Charles Wuorinen evening. ♦

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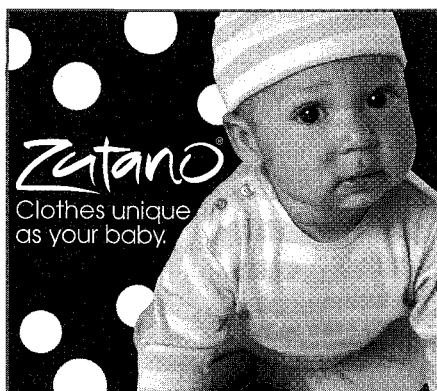
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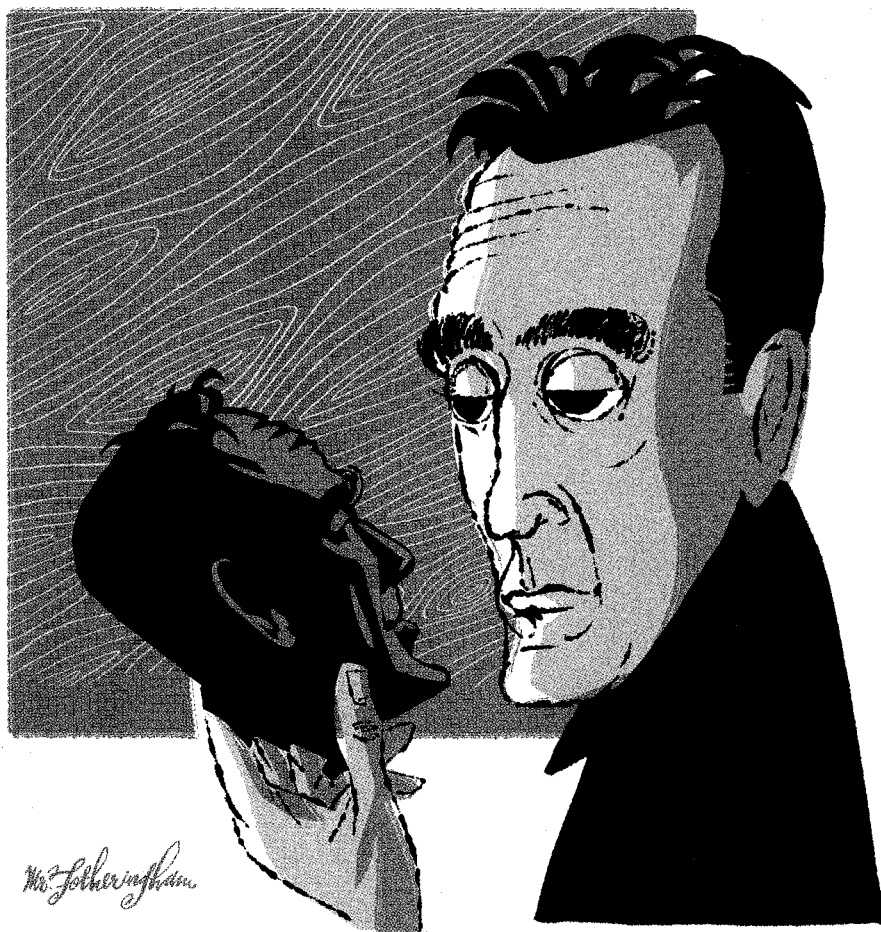
PLAYING DOCTOR

"Huff" and "House."

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

You wouldn't wish the terrific scene-stealers Oliver Platt and Blythe Danner as co-stars on the lead actor of a TV series, but Hank Azaria, as the main character, a successful middle-aged psychiatrist, in the new Showtime Sunday-night series "Huff," finds a way to keep his bearings in the actorly storm that those two whip up as his best friend and his mother.

he isn't acting but is "just being," and that's perfect for the role he's playing—someone whose job it is to listen, and not to be the center of attention—and for the plight that his character, Dr. Craig Huffstodt, or Huff to his friends, finds himself in at the beginning of the series. One day, after he has seen a couple of more or less garden-variety patients in his Los Angeles office



Hank Azaria plays Huff, a middle-aged psychiatrist having an identity crisis.

He does it in probably the only way possible, by being unassuming. Azaria has a beaky face, a receding hairline, and no attributes that add up to conventional star quality, and it is to his credit that he doesn't overcompensate by doing anything superfluous to try to make himself pop off the screen. You have the sense in "Huff" that

(including one who can't figure out how to get her boyfriend to stop cracking his knuckles), Sam, a fifteen-year-old boy he has been treating who is distraught over the way his parents reacted to his telling them that he's gay, takes a gun from his knapsack, puts it in his mouth, and pulls the trigger. Huff is sure that the boy wasn't

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suicidal, but he can't be sure that it wasn't something he said that set Sam off or that he couldn't have got the gun away from him, and those questions contribute to his agony. Unfortunately, in a way, Huff's life doesn't come to a halt after Sam's suicide—he has to try to figure out how to go on while still going on. There is continual low-level skirmishing between his wife, Beth (Paget Brewster), and his mother, Izzy (Danner), who lives just thirty feet away, in a guesthouse. His friend Russell (Platt), a high-powered lawyer, is effective in helping Huff when he happens not to be drunk or stoned or picking up a hooker, but he's not exactly reliable; his legal work on Huff's behalf when Huff is sued by Sam's parents is scarily seat-of-the-pants. And there are still patients to see—one of whom, a "bipolar borderline psychotic" played by Lara Flynn Boyle, has "Fatal Attraction" tendencies. "God, Melody, are you going to boil my bunny?" Huff says to her when she materializes in a parking garage. At least Huff's sweet-faced fourteen-year-old son, Byrd (Anton Yelchin), is, for the most part, not a problem; in fact, he's freakishly gentle, thoughtful, and kind, like an angel in an elementary-school pageant. He seems not even to know *how* to sulk. Huff's father is not around, but he's a presence nonetheless, as a convicted committer of emotional crimes. At dinner the night that Sam killed himself, Izzy starts a sentence with "When your father was alive," and Huff cuts her off: "Dad isn't dead, Mother." Izzy replies, "Well, he is to me."

When you try to describe "Huff," it falls apart in your hands, because although there are story lines that progress, the show's strength is in the small moments that don't always lead anywhere, and in its ability to bring us into the intimate core of those moments, whether they are between two people or are an internal, personal experience. As Beth is in the bathroom getting ready for bed one night, she's yammering on about everyday things, and Huff, out of sight, doesn't respond. She walks into the bedroom and sees him crying silently on the bed. She rushes to comfort him, but you're left with an awful sense of his having been utterly alone while his wife was a million miles away, if only for a minute or two. Beth and Huff have a good relationship—they *like* each other—and yet you can see little ups and downs in almost everything that happens between them. Several of the early episodes of "Huff," which

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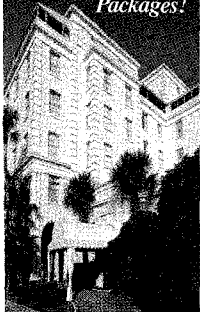
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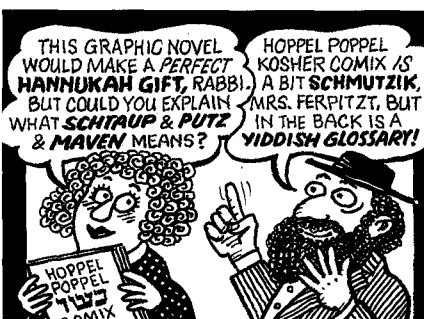
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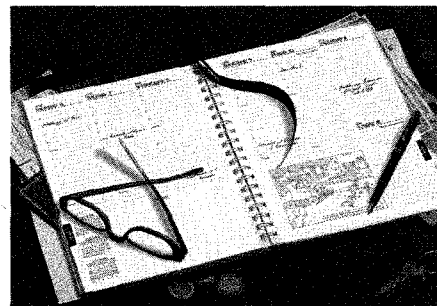
was created by Bob Lowry, were directed by Scott Winant, who oversaw "Thirtysomething," and occasionally you are reminded in "Huff" of that show's mood, its combination of warmth and sadness.

There are elements of "Huff" that could be seen as formulaic or as hitting the poignancy button too hard. Each episode ends with Huff visiting his brother, Teddy (Andy Comeau), who is schizophrenic and lives in an institution, but this is when Huff opens up—these visits are *his* therapy. And sometimes the scenes are funny. "Huff" actually doesn't dwell on therapy, either the process or its peculiarities, and the therapy scenes we see don't have much verisimilitude. (In this show, as in "The Sopranos," the doctor's office is the size of the National Gallery.) But "Huff" does have, among its other qualities, one line that will make every underappreciated therapist happy, when a surgeon in a hospital turns to Huff and says, "It must be very hard being a psychiatrist."

Two monosyllabically titled shows about doctors whose names begin with "H" debuted this month; the other is Fox's "House," on Tuesday nights, which stars Hugh Laurie as Dr. Gregory House, an infectious-disease specialist at a teaching hospital in Princeton. House is equal parts brilliant diagnostician and—oh, dear—sulfurous churl, wounded in body and in spirit. He walks with difficulty, and has to use a cane—the result of an unbrilliant diagnostician's mistake earlier in his life. Bitterness ensued, and much pill-popping; House downs Vicodin three times in the first twenty minutes of the pilot. This Snarkus Welby finds patients unbearable—they're just the box that diseases come in, and they're in the way. The show turns the humane-TV-doctor stereotype upside down, which is not necessarily an interesting thing to do—*anything* can be turned upside down. (Including actors; Laurie is British, and he's playing an American.) Of course, some stereotypes are worth perpetuating, and that is why a female doctor on House's team wears blouses that are cut all the way down to South America: All right, Mr. De Mille, I'm ready for my mam-mogram. Also, "House" features cool, "Fantastic Voyage"-like special effects of patients' innards. I'll bet you didn't know that when your kidneys shut down they sound like bubble wrap popping. ♦

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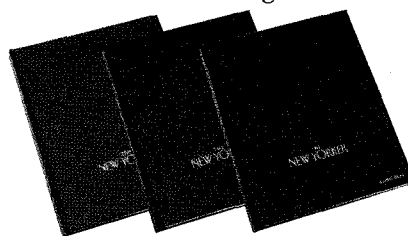
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SEX APPEAL

Alfred C. Kinsey reconsidered.

BY DAVID DENBY

Liam Neeson is six feet four inches tall, with a rugby player's broken nose, sleepy eyes, and a foghorn voice that can fall to a soothing caress. He has scale and range—he can be volcanically angry and touchingly gentle. Yet Neeson's movie career hasn't bloomed the way it should have; he's not quite a star. He has often been relegated to second-

mans, and who, in 1948, pioneered the statistical study of sex in the startling "Sexual Behavior in the Human Male." Condon's movie has its share of eureka moments (premarital sex is widespread!) and Fateful Turning Points When the Hero Must Not Waver, and other such stirring clichés of the bio-pic genre. But "Kinsey" is also playful and happy and



Liam Neeson plays Kinsey in Bill Condon's new movie.

tier historical epics—he looks good in kilts (in "Rob Roy") or standing on a soapbox (in "Michael Collins") or carrying a load on his back across the French landscape (in "Les Misérables")—but he's hard to use in a contemporary setting. His earthy directness and largeness of spirit usually overwhelm a jacket and tie—he triumphs in modern dress only when the role releases his talent for melancholy rumination, when his character is troubled as well as strong. In "Schindler's List," his performance as Oskar Schindler lit up when Schindler, a free-wheeling exploiter of Jewish ghetto labor, developed a conscience. Now, in Bill Condon's "Kinsey," Neeson offers both a booming voice and a tormented candor in his portrayal of another distressed giant—Alfred C. Kinsey, the entomologist who gave up bugs for hu-

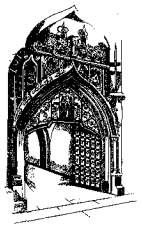
man, even naughty. It's partly a scientific brief, partly a song of sex, and it's enormously enjoyable. At the center of the whirlwind, Neeson's Kinsey is a Samson figure—fearless but, at times, maddeningly dense. Neeson makes him an awkward, preemptory man who is never at ease with himself or the world.

"Kinsey" begins with a crisply edited, surprisingly funny sequence devoted to the normally dry procedural issue of interviewing techniques. In the early nineteen-forties, at Indiana University, Kinsey and his associates, preparing to interview thousands of men across the country about their sex lives, decide to abandon written questionnaires and talk to their subjects face to face. But how do you ask a stranger about his sexual memories? The younger members of the team—Clyde Martin (Peter Sarsgaard),

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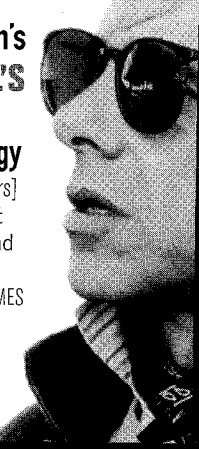
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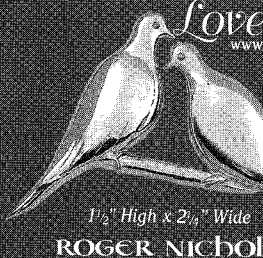
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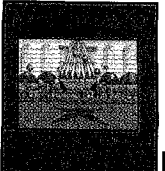
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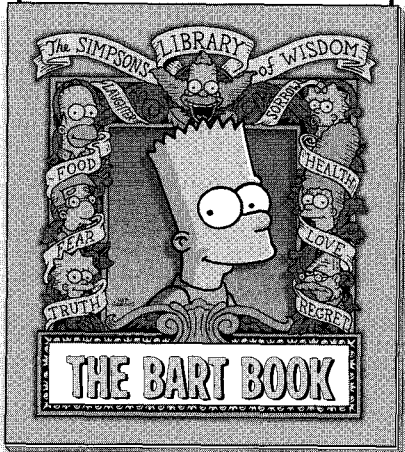
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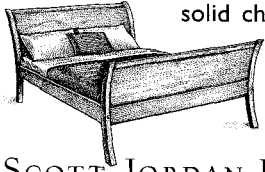


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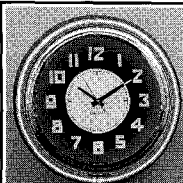
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Wardell Pomeroy (Chris O'Donnell), and Paul Gebhard (Timothy Hutton)—take turns interviewing Kinsey and then one another. Sex is a democracy, Kinsey says; the researchers must hold back nothing of their own experience. Acknowledge, acknowledge! As the young men question their boss, Kinsey interrupts them, demanding alterations in their voices and their posture; he wants their manner to be at once friendly and neutral, or, at least, nonjudgmental, since, when they are conducting real interviews, they will have no idea what might spring from the memory of some glum-looking farm boy. As Kinsey's assistants face the initial questions ("How young were you when you first . . ."), they quiver slightly. Later on, they become eager to boast of their experience. These men, including Kinsey, not only enjoy talking about sex; they are having it all over the place. From the beginning, Condon establishes a complicity of knowingness and pleasure between the Kinsey gang and the audience. And the interviews, we realize, are natural material for a movie. Again and again, the cinematographer, Frederick Elmes ("Blue Velvet"), isolates a subject against a bland background, and brushes past appearances, peering into his unconscious.

Condon, the talented writer-director of "Gods and Monsters," uses Kinsey's recollections as a jumping-off point for flashbacks to his repressed childhood and youth. A few rum scenes slow things down for a while. The young Alfred is an Eagle Scout, and when a younger Scout leans toward him, eager to touch, Alfred, who may be eager, too, leads him in prayer—a solemn, queasy moment that doesn't work. At home, Kinsey's father (John Lithgow) rails against everything from cigarettes to zippers (they aid fornication, he says). Although Lithgow plays this sarcastic and ignorant man with bitter intensity, the elder Kinsey seems like a huffy villain from an old play. The flashbacks to Kinsey's love life as a junior professor in the nineteen-twenties come off much better. Laura Linney is on hand as the strong-minded, good-humored Clara McMillen, known as Mac, a student who sees a future husband in the clumsy entomologist. As Kinsey, at his lab bench, rapturously expounds his obsession with gall wasps,

Linney looks on in adoration, and Neeson's hair stands up as straight as wire. We get the point: the man is erect, and waiting to unleash himself. Kinsey and Mac are both virgins, and their wedding night is a disaster, but they go to a doctor for help—an event that the movie presents as the beginning of a revolution in consciousness. They master the physical facts behind their difficulties, and, with a laugh and a few deep sighs, deliver themselves into a passionate marriage. Kinsey's true career is born, and the movie takes off.

A few years later, Kinsey is denouncing the marriage manuals of the time as moralistic nonsense—they don't even get the anatomy right—and at Indiana, in the forties, he starts giving sex-instruction lectures, illustrating them with a slide show of genitalia which shocks his students (it still looks shocking to us). In the meantime, his statistical studies, by recording the variety of what men actually do, end the old attempt to isolate a few individuals as "perverts" and "deviants." The interviews reveal an underground in which everyone, at one time or another, is a revolutionary. With gathering excitement and missionary fervor, "Kinsey" brings the good word on such things as masturbation (nearly universal among young men), oral sex (popular across the board), and homosexuality (more widely practiced than earlier supposed). Be not afraid, you are not alone—that's Kinsey's exultant message. In a mischievous parody of forties hygiene films, Condon has happy faces—Kinsey's chattering subjects—pop up all over a map of the United States, with lines connecting one face to the next. In 1953, Kinsey produces another explosive volume, on women, a study that buries for all time the Victorian denial of female sexual pleasure.

When the first Kinsey book was published, Lionel Trilling wrote that Kinsey's replacement of the old, prescriptive standard of "normal" with the new, descriptive notion of "natural" liberated a nation. But Trilling complained of reductivism: the statistical method removed sex from religion, morality, social life—everything that, in the past, had given it meaning. And the statistics wound up celebrating variety and frequency rather than quality. In the movie,

Mac anxiously voices some of these concerns to her husband, whose curiosity is taking him farther and farther from the marital bed. Kinsey plunges into Chicago's gay bars, collects pornography, conducts S & M experiments. On the road, he allows himself to be seduced by the ambitious Clyde Martin. Peter Sarsgaard, in his quiet way, is an intimidating actor; his eyes command people to do what he wants. Sitting on a hotel bed, Sarsgaard's Martin leans toward Kinsey to make a pass, and this time Kinsey doesn't pray. Is it desire he feels, or is he acting on the scientist's responsibility to experience everything—or both? Perhaps Condon doesn't know, or can't make up his mind.

The movie presses ahead, vivacious, witty, highly pleased with its own friskiness, but uncertain in tone. Kinsey, seeking a broader range of experience, encourages his assistants to sleep with one another's wives and with interviewees, too, and he films some of these couplings. As the research group sits around uneasily watching the films, we no longer feel complicit with these men. Kinsey's licensing his staff to play around comes off as voyeuristic and naïve: the master's attempt to establish a free-love utopia in the academic garden ends in tears and fistfights.

Was Kinsey a fool? His interest in such once-a-philosopher-twice-a-pervert practices as puncturing his own fore-skin is certainly more idiotic than courageous. In the self-mutilation scene, Neeson, sitting in the bathroom with blood dripping on the floor, airs his bewilderment to Linney. He complains that he felt no pleasure; it just hurt. The moment is both funny and touching—Neeson is like a kid disappointed by a roller coaster that never left the ground. Puzzlement becomes Kinsey's regular fate: to his amazement, the book on female sexuality arouses public indignation, and, in his later years, he can't raise the money that he needs to continue his work. Bill Condon's final judgment of Kinsey is split: he enjoys using Kinsey's exploits to provoke, but, at the same time, he demonstrates that Kinsey undervalued social restraints and was oblivious to the messes he created around him. Condon's Kinsey is definitely a hero, but he's also a neurotically driven man with a messianic streak, a sacrificial figure: wearing himself out in the pursuit of knowledge and experience, he died for our pleasure. Whatever else this movie does, it throws down the gauntlet in the culture wars. The tumult over Alfred C. Kinsey may be just beginning. ♦

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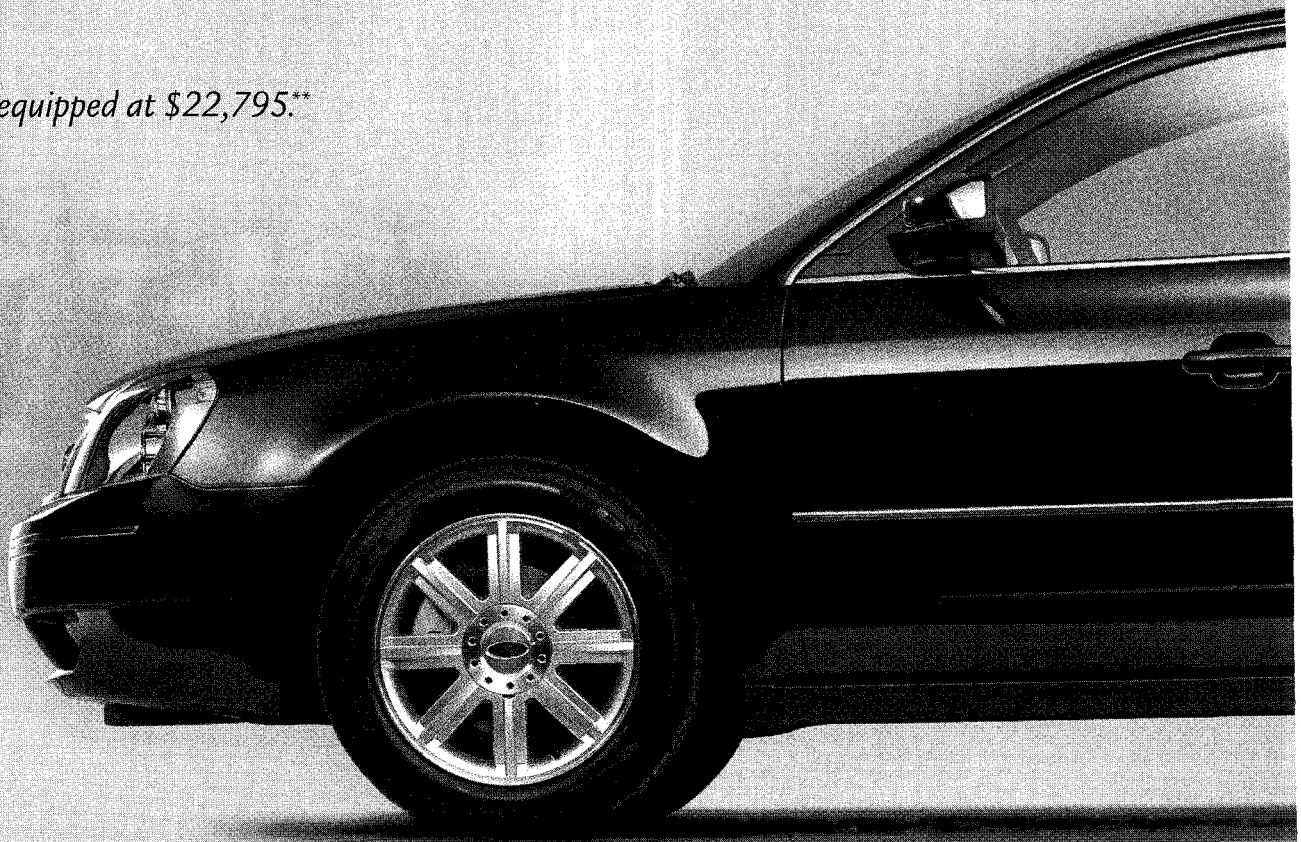
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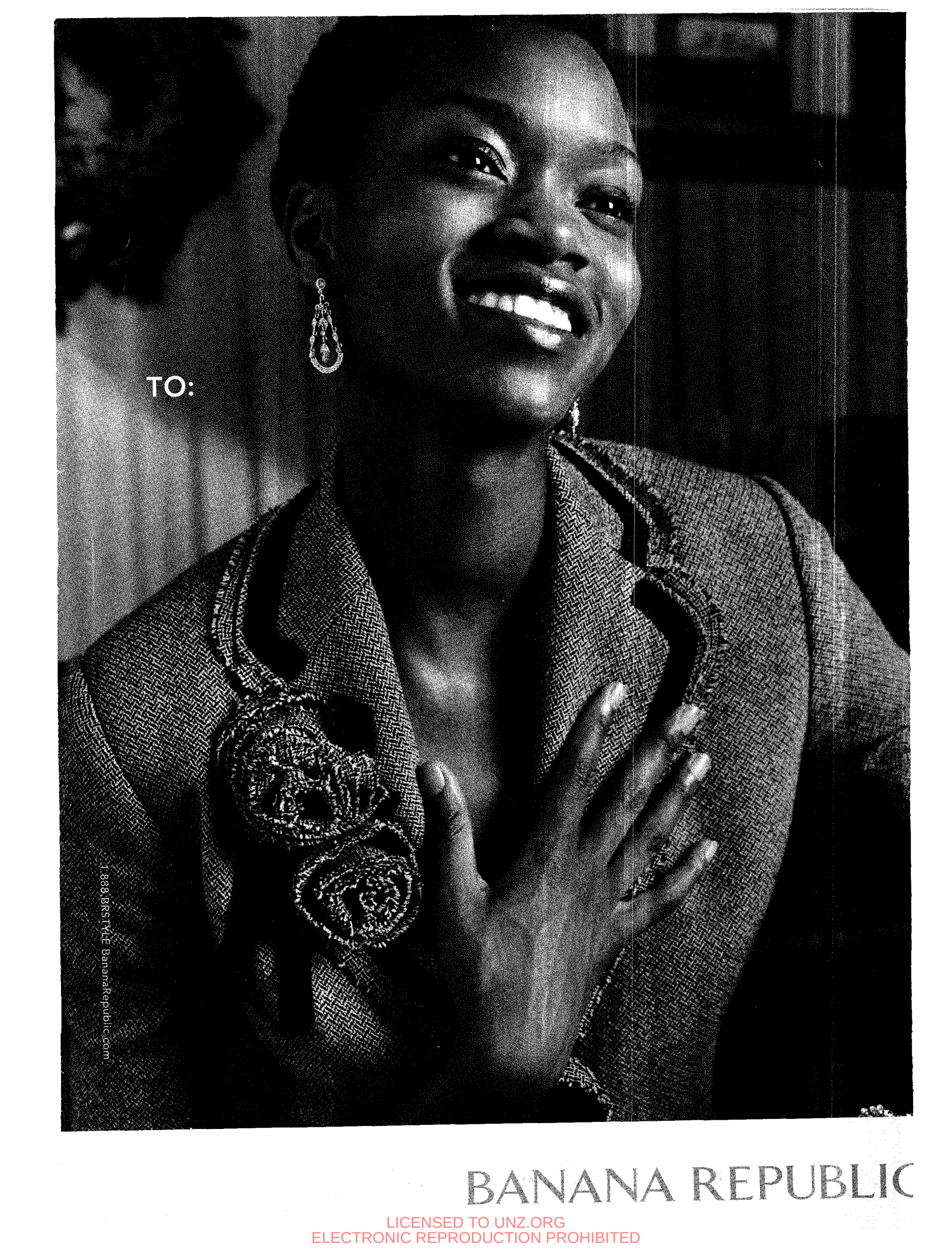
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